4130. df. 5.

Conſcientious Nonconformity

To every Civil Eſtabliſhment of RELIGION *whatever, and to the* Engliſh *Eſtabliſhment thereof in particular, conſider'd and defended:*

OR A

VINDICATION

OF THE

Religious and Political PRINCIPLES and WORSHIP of the *Engliſh* Proteſtant *DISSENTERS.*

Βεβηλοῖς ἅπασιν ἡ συνείδησις θεός. Menand.
Nunquam magis periclitatur Religio quàm inter Reverendiſſimos. *Luth.*

LONDON:
Printed for J. NOON, at the *White Hart* near *Mercers Chapel*, in *Cheapſide.* M DCC XXXVII.

[Price One Shilling.]

Wm. Oller

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

PREFACE.

IN the following Sheets, the Author is not ſo vain as to think he has advanced any Thing that was never ſaid before by one or other: But as there is not a greater Variety of handling any Subject, than there is of Taſtes correſponding thereto, this perhaps may ſerve for an Excuſe for publiſhing this Performance. Beſides, the Author perſuades himſelf that he has contracted into a leſs Compaſs what might be offered more largely in the following Debate, and therefore has done ſome Service to ſuch as are not willing to ſpend their Time in peruſing prolix and tedious Diſputes, and alſo to the Bulk of common Readers, who are better able to judge of an Argument when it is put in few Words, than when it is drawn out to a tedious Length, by Circumlocutions, Digreſſions, and a pompous Shew of Learning and great Reading. In the following Pages therefore every thing is avoided, as far as was poſſible, that is not clear and undeniable to every ſincere Enquirer after Truth.

With Reſpect to the Way of writing in which he has choſen to communicate his Thoughts, which is that of Dialogue, nothing need be ſaid in Defence of it in general, it being a Method which has been uſed by the beſt Writers, eſpecially amongſt the Antients, and very uſeful in itſelf for leading the Reader into a right Knowledge of the Nature of any Subject, as it allows more Freedom, and gives a better Advantage for impreſſing ſome Things than a continued Diſcourſe does. One Objection there is indeed againſt this Method of Writing, which is, that frequently Dialogue-Writers deal not fairly by the Managers of a Debate, but endeavour to make one of them ſpeak weakly and ignorantly, while they employ all their Skill to furniſh the other with the ſtrongeſt Arguments, the ſmarteſt Re-

partees, and every thing that may give him an Advantage over his Adverſary. This is confeſſedly a common Fault amongſt this Sort of Writers, and ſome perhaps may imagine it is what the Author is guilty of in this Performance that the Reader has now before him: But he can aſſure the Reader that he is not in the leaſt conſcious of ſo unfair and ſcandalous a Practice, and that he has not knowingly concealed any thing that made againſt him. Therefore ſhould any think one of the Managers of the following Debate ſays not enough, and the other ſays too much, the Reaſon is not unfair Dealing, but unavoidable Neceſſity, as is apprehended, becauſe in Reality one of them had only ſo little, and the other ſo much to offer each for himſelf.

Some alſo may think more proper Perſons might have been choſen for the Management of the Debate than thoſe who are mentioned: But be this as it will, as it is a Matter of no Moment, nothing need be ſaid relating to it, only that there really have been ſuch Perſons as are here ſuppoſed; and every one may pleaſe his own Fancy, by ſuppoſing others to be the Speakers, that they may think more proper.

Some too may think it worth their while to write againſt this plain and well-meant Performance; and ſhould any do it, there would be no Foundation for Wonder and Aſtoniſhment, conſidering the Nature of the Subject; nay, the Author is ſo far from imagining that it will pleaſe every Side, that he ſtrongly ſuſpects it will not pleaſe any one Side whatever wholly: But whoever are pleaſed or diſpleaſed with it, nothing that may be offered againſt it ſhall be taken notice of, but deſervedly deſpiſed and anſwered with Silence, unleſs it may affect the Argument; and every Thing of this Nature ſhall have due Regard ſhewn, either by a farther Explication of what is already advanced, or by an ingenuous Acknowledgment of Miſtakes; for here no Preferment is aimed at, nor any Party-Cauſe eſpouſed, nor any Thing endeavoured but the promoting of the Intereſt of Truth and ſolid Virtue.

Vive, vale, ſi quid noviſti rectius iſtis,
Candidus imperti: Si non, his utere mecum.

HORAT.

NONCONFORMITY

To All

Church *Eſtabliſhments*

Justified:

In a Dialogue between a Clergyman of the Church of England *and his Son, who turn'd Nonconformiſt at the Univerſity.*

PART I.

F. IT is no ſmall Trouble to me, young Man, that you have left the Communion of our Church, and are gone over to the Diſſenters, ſince there are many Objections againſt them, which I wonder how you can anſwer, after all that has been writ in Support of them; and therefore I have a mind to hear what you have to ſay to them, and offer for yourſelf in Defence of this Separation of yours, which is ſo great a Grief to me. Let me have your Anſwers to the Objections I have againſt this Sect (of which you are now become one) upon theſe Heads, *viz.* their Separation from our excellent Church, their Teachers or Preachers, their Worſhip, and their Faith.

And to begin with their Separation from our Church; it is *Schiſm*, and they are *Schiſmaticks*, and therefore in a very dangerous Condition; and a great Grief it is to me, that you are guilty among the reſt of Schiſm.

S. Your Grief, Sir, is my Trouble, and ſo much my Trouble, that I almoſt wiſh that I could ſee Things in the ſame Light you do, that you might have no Occaſion for Grief upon my Account. But at preſent I cannot

cannot be of your Mind, if I would ever ſo gladly, for you very well know we cannot always believe as we pleaſe, tho' we can act as we will. And I am ready to think, if you will condeſcend to hear what even I have to ſay for myſelf upon this Head, you will not take me to be ſo great a Sinner, and in ſo dangerous a Condition as you apprehend me to be in. True, *real Schiſm* is a great Sin, and a *real Schiſmatick* a great Offender; but as the Word Schiſm is commonly uſed, it is only a Term of Reproach, and a *religious Scare-Crow* to make ſome appear odious, and to affright others from them; a *Nick-Name* given frequently either by *weak* or *wicked* Men to their Fellow Chriſtians, to render them ignominious to the blind and unthinking Herd. Thus a furious and barbarous Perſecutor takes a good Man that cannot believe all his ſacred Nonſenſe, and talk his unmeaning Gibberiſh, and worſhip God in his antick Ways, and dreſſes him in the Skin of ſome wild Beaſt, and then throws him out to be worried.

F. What, I perceive you are for clearing yourſelf from Schiſm, and, like all Sinners, going to throw the Blame off yourſelf upon ſome others: But you will find this no eaſy thing to do. However, my Patience will permit you to ſpeak for yourſelf.

S. Right; I am, Sir, for wiping off the Imputation of Schiſm, and would rather, I muſt own, have the Guilt of it to lie upon others than myſelf. *Schiſm in reality* I take to be nothing elſe in the Church, than what Sedition and Rebellion is in the State, or to be very much like it; and I ſuppoſe it is in Truth an unneceſſary and an uncharitable Separation from that particular Church of which we were once Members. Therefore if I be a Schiſmatick, I muſt be guilty of an unneceſſary and uncharitable Separation from your Church: But that I am ſo, none I verily believe can poſſibly prove. It cannot be denied, I do locally ſeparate from your publick worſhipping Aſſemblies, that is, I do not ſtatedly and perſonally join with any one of them in their publick Acts of divine Service or Worſhip, but go ſtatedly to Meeting-Houſes, or Conventicles, as ſome love to call them in Contempt, there to worſhip the one true God thro' Jeſus Chriſt the one true Mediator. And this others may call, if they pleaſe, going to a Conventicle, neither am I aſham'd of it; for as a Conventicle formerly ſignified a religious

religious worſhipping Aſſembly of the primitive Chriſtians, ſo now in Truth it means ſuch an Aſſembly, tho' ſome who uſe the Term mean no ſuch Matter by it. But that this Practice of mine includes in it the Sin of real Schiſm, is ſooner ſaid then prov'd, and what I ſhall endeavour to ſhew cannot be proved, becauſe it is not ſuch a Separation as conſtitutes the Sin of Schiſm.

F. You talk big, and aſſert poſitively, but pray clear yourſelf from the Charge of Schiſm brought againſt you and your Party, which I think you cannot do. For what is the Eſtabliſhed Church which you ſeparate from? Is it not principally that Form of divine Worſhip appointed by the ſupreme Legiſlature of theſe Kingdoms, by the King, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons? And a Complication of Crimes, of Pride and Self-conceit, Inſolence and Contempt of our Betters, and almoſt every thing that is bad, muſt be compriz'd in rejecting what their Wiſdom has appointed, and in chuſing a Way of divine Worſhip which they have neither appointed nor do approve. This muſt be Superſtition and Faction, and what not, all blended together, and the accumulated Guilt of your Sect. What you can offer in Defence of it, I wonder; but as you are accuſed, it is fit you ſhould be allowed to purge yourſelf if you can.

S. True, a Regard ſhould be paid to the Conſtitutions of ſuch great Perſons as you mention; what the publick Wiſdom of a Nation injoins to be practis'd in divine Worſhip, ſhould be carefully conſider'd and perform'd too, if there be not good Reaſon to the contrary; and a good Reaſon it is to the contrary, if this publick Wiſdom and mine happen to differ and to injoin contrary Things; for *whatever is not of Faith is Sin.* The Truth undeniably is, I muſt judge for myſelf, and no Man nor Body of Men whatever for me; I muſt call no Man *Maſter* upon Earth, neither the Civil Magiſtrate, nor any Eccleſiaſtick or Body of Eccleſiaſticks, for *one is my Maſter in Heaven*; and with Reference to him the greateſt Perſons on Earth, and the meaneſt alſo, are Brethren and Fellow-Servants.

F. Hold, not ſo faſt. Does not ſacred Writ command us to obey them that have the Rule over us, particularly them who watch for our Souls, that is, our Biſhops and other Spiritual Paſtors and Teachers? But inſtead of obeying them, you are bringing them down to a Level with

with yourſelf, and even with every Mechanick and Day-Labourer, and by your Scheme making every Perſon equally a Judge in Matters of Religion with the moſt Learned and moſt Reverend. This is a levelling Principle with a Witneſs.

S. Sir, you may call it what you pleaſe; it is a *Principle* I muſt ſtick to *as a Man*, *a Chriſtian*, and *a Proteſtant*. It was upon this Principle the *Reformation* from Popery was *begun*, and upon this it *reſts*, and let this be removed, it muſt of Neceſſity *fall*. This is a Principle all hold, excepting thoſe who have no Principles, or ill ones; all but Bigots and Libertines, of whom the former are in vile Slavery, and the latter not in a State of free-thinking, but of no thinking. And as to the Text which ſays we muſt obey them that have the Rule over us; it evidently does not mean what you pretend, that others muſt judge for us, and not we for ourſelves in Matters of Religion, becauſe there are other Texts that are inconſiſtent with this thus underſtood. The Word we tranſlate is *Egoumenoi*, not *Kurieuontes*; the former whereof ſignifies *Guides or Leaders*, whoſe Buſineſs it is to point out to the People not their own Fancies and Inventions, but the Mind and Law of our great and common Lord and Maſter; the latter Term, which is not in the Text, ſignifies *Lords* and *Rulers* over their Slaves and Subjects. And ſuch Rulers no ſpiritual Paſtors whatever are ſtiled in the New Teſtament; nay, it is always declared of the chief Paſtors or ſpiritual Rulers in the Chriſtian Church, that they are not Rulers in the latter lordly Senſe. The Apoſtle *Paul* diſclaims all Rule of this Kind, 2 *Cor.* i. 24. *Not that we have Dominion over your Faith, but are Helpers of your Joy.* The Apoſtle *Peter* condemns it in all ſpiritual Paſtors, 1 *Eph.* v. 3. *Neither as being Lords over God's Heritage*, &c. Spiritual Paſtors are of the ſame Species with their Flocks, and their proper Buſineſs is to lead them to the Food prepared for them by the chief Shepherd and Biſhop of Souls, but not to drive them to unwholſome Weeds; they are to conduct them in the Paths of Wiſdom and Virtue, but not to drive them to the Market or Slaughter, or to ſhear and fleece them at their Pleaſure. In a Word, they are no more than Under-Shepherds, and to do nothing in the Diſcharge of their Function but what is agreeable to the Will and Law of the chief Shepherd;

Shepherd; and therefore when they ceaſe to follow his Orders, they are not his Under-Shepherds, but *Hirelings* and *Murtherers*, and *Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing*, as himſelf calls them, *John* x. And therefore for Chriſtian People to obey ſuch, is to follow not the *Miniſters* of Chriſt, but *uſurping and domineering Men*, who have no more Right to *lord it over God's Heritage*, than any Temporal Prince has to tyrannize over his own Subjects; and therefore to hear both *ſmall and great Eccleſiaſticks* claim an abſolute Submiſſion from Chriſtian People, is more provoking than to hear a proud Tyrant upon a Throne call for Paſſive Obedience and Non-Reſiſtance. A blind Submiſſion the Apoſtle always abhorred, and the Apoſtle *Paul* in particular, tho' divinely inſpired, did not expect Men blindly to receive all he ſaid; ſo far from that, he highly *commended* the *Bereans* for that which moſt Eccleſiaſticks *do not like very well*, an honeſt ſearching into the Scriptures, to ſee whether he taught agreeably to them. Even our great Lord and Maſter Jeſus Chriſt treated his Hearers after this Manner, and put them upon examining his Doctrine; *He that has Ears to hear, let him hear.* And ſhall any Man or Set of Men, *any fallible Aſſemblies or Convocations, any Synods or Councils*, ſet up for being *Lords* over our Conſciences? It is not to be endured, ſhould their Pride and Vanity, their Ambition and Luſt of Dominion puſh them upon ſuch an Attempt, eſpecially ſeeing there's too much Truth in that plain and coarſe Expreſſion of *Luther*'s, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quàm inter Reverendiſſimos*, Religion is in the moſt Danger amongſt the moſt Reverend.

All this concerning the Power and Authority of the Chriſtian Prieſthood in Religion, the wiſeſt and beſt of them in every Age have acknowledged; and many honeſt and plain, ſtrong and expreſs Paſſages there are in their own Writings, in which they have diſclaimed the Authority which I have been proving does not belong to them. I ſhall here only mention one of a great many, and that is a Paſſage of Archbiſhop *Cranmer*'s ſubſcribed with his own Hand. " In the Admiſſion, ſays he, of " Biſhops, Parſons, Vicars and other Prieſts, there are " divers comely Ceremonies and Solemnities uſed, " which be not of Neceſſity, but only for good Order " and ſeemly Faſhion; for if they were committed " without ſuch Ceremonies, nevertheleſs they were tru-

" ly committed. There is no more Promiſe of God, " that Grace is given *in committing the Eccleſiaſtical* " *Office*, than it is *in committing the Civil.* In the Apo- " ſtles Time there was *no appointing* of Miniſters, but " *only the uniform Conſent* of Chriſtian Multitudes among " themſelves to follow the Advice of ſuch as God had " indued moſt with the Spirit of Wiſdom and Counſel. " And when any were appointed or ſent by the Apoſtles " or others, the People did accept them, not for *any* " *Supremacy*, *Impery*, *or Dominion* that the Apoſtles had " over them, but *as People ready to obey* the Advice of " good Counſellors. The Biſhops and Prieſts were at " one Time, and were not two Things, but one and " the ſame Office in the Beginning of Chriſt's Religion. " *Princes and Governors* may make a Prieſt by the holy " Scriptures, and that by the Authority of God com- " mitted to them, *and ſo may the People* alſo by their " Election. In the New Teſtament he that is appointed " to be a Biſhop or a Prieſt *needeth no Conſecration* by " the Scriptures; for Election or Appointment thereto " is ſufficient. It is not againſt God's Law, but con- " trarily they ought indeed ſo to do; and there be Hi- " ſtories that witneſs, that ſome Chriſtian Princes, and " other Lay-Men unconſecrate, have done the ſame." Thus far that moſt worthy Prelate and glorious Martyr.

And now, if this be not the Truth concerning the Power and Authority of the Prieſthood, then their Scheme of Prieſtly Dominion muſt be admitted for true, who tell us that " the *Prieſthood* is a Princely Power, " greater and more venerable than that of the Emperor: " That Spiritual Government is further above the Civil " Power, than Heaven is above the Earth: That a Bi- " ſhop is to be honoured as God! That the Revenue of " the Prieſts ought to be greater than the Revenues of " Kings: That a greater Puniſhment is due to an Of- " fence againſt the Prieſts than againſt a King: That " it is a Contradiction and an Impoſſibility for any " State to have Authority over the Church:" And, to add no more of this lordly Scheme contrived by ſome Prieſts for advancing their Dominion and Grandeur, " that Great Men ought not to ſay *my Chaplain*, in " any other Senſe than we ſay *my King* or *my God.*" In ſhort, there's no Medium between allowing *the Liberty of private Judgment*, and permitting every Man to act according

according to his own Conſcience in Religion, and the *moſt abſolute Slavery and Voſſalage to the Prieſthood:* Either the former muſt be allowed, or the latter muſt be ſubmitted to; and if the Prieſthood tell us, that White is Black, and Black is White, that Virtue is Vice, and Vice is Virtue, the Laity muſt ſubmit and believe them if they can; and if they cannot, *as perhaps ſome cannot*, they muſt none of them be ſo inſolent as to contradict their Oracles. I ſhall add no more upon this Head, but this plain Truth, That the Buſineſs of Prieſts, be they ever ſo learned and highly dignified, is not *to make a new Goſpel* for the Laity, but *to explain the old one* to them as well as they can, and to perſuade them by rational Arguments to *believe* and *obey* it.

F. But if the *ſpiritual Miniſters* of Jeſus muſt not be allowed to have Authority to dictate to Chriſtian People in Matters of a religious Nature, you will not be againſt *the Magiſtrates* doing it with their *ghoſtly Advice* and Aſſiſtance.

S. The plain *Engliſh* of this Doctrine concerning the Power of the Civil Magiſtrate *circa Sacra*, I ſhall take the Liberty of expreſſing in the Words of a celebrated Writer of yours, Dr. *Parker* Biſhop of *Oxford*, and then conſider what Truth there is in it. That Author, in his *Eccleſiaſtical Polity*, tells us, " It is abſolutely ne-
" ceſſary to the Peace and Government of the World,
" that the ſupreme Magiſtrate of every Commonwealth
" ſhould be veſted with a Power to govern and conduct
" the Conſciences of Subjects in Affairs of Religion;
" and without this Power to bind them to his own Re-
" ligion, he is no better than a Statue and an Image of
" Government; and that the Civil Magiſtrate was
" veſted with this Power by *a Right antecedent* to
" Chriſt." And as for the poor Subjects, " *Private*
" *Men* are not properly *ſui Juris*,----*they* are not to be
" *directed by their own Judgments*, or determined by
" their own Wills, but *by the Commands* and Determi-
" nations of *publick Conſcience*; and if there be any Sin
" in the Command, he that impoſes it ſhall anſwer for
" it, and not I whoſe Duty it is to obey: The Com-
" mands of Authority will warrant my Obedience, my
" Obedience will hallow or at leaſt excuſe my Action,
" and ſo ſecure me from Sin, if not from Error." Nay, this is not all, tho' one would think it carries the Mat-

ter high enough; but he tells us, "It is but *a rude Ex-* "*preſſion* (not to call it profane, becauſe it is ſo com- "mon by cuſtomary Miſtake) that Kings are ſupreme "Governors *under* Chriſt. They are and ever were "ſo *under God*, but ſo as to be *ſuperior to Chriſt*; as "Chriſt is Head of his Church *within their Dominions.*" But yet, tho' this be a very great Compliment to the Civil Magiſtrate, he is not ſo much obliged to this Author and his Brethren, as it may at firſt be imagin'd he is; for after all this Idolatry paid to the Civil Magiſtrate, the Doctor lets him know that his Power, as antient and exalted as it is, is a precarious thing *without the Aſſiſtance of Eccleſiaſticks*, and all Government muſt owe its Quiet and Continuance to the Church's Patronage. So that it is not the *Civil Magiſtrate* that is veſted with this Greatneſs of Power in the Buſineſs of Religion, but *the Prieſthood*, who may, if they think good, veſt the Civil Magiſtrate with it. And then he proceeds to ſhew, "that the Civil Magiſtrate muſt not "let this Power lie dormant, but muſt *ſcourge* the Peo- "ple into Order, he muſt *chaſtiſe* them out of their "Peeviſhneſs, and *laſh* them into Obedience. There "is no Remedy, but the *Rod and Correction.* He muſt "reſtrain the *ſcrupulous* with more Vigour than the *un-* "*ſanctified Villains.* He muſt expoſe them to the *Cor-* "*rection* of the publick Rods and Axes. And Princes, "unleſs they will be *reſolute*, muſt *not govern.*" This, Sir, is the plain *Engliſh* of that Authority that many Eccleſiaſticks aſſert the Civil Magiſtrate to be veſted with in Matters of Religion. The Short of which Doctrine is, that Princes *may compel* their Subjects to be of any Religion, good or bad, true or falſe, or of no Religion at all, according to their Humour and Caprice, if it be *not contrary* to the Humour of *their Betters, their ghoſtly Sovereigns.*

F. But is not the King of *England*, in particular, ſupreme Head in all Cauſes, and over all Perſons Spiritual and Temporal, Clergy and Laity?

S. Yes, He is, but not in the Senſe of this Scheme of Dr. *Parker*'s and many more. And his Majeſty's Senſe and good Judgment will not allow him to believe either himſelf or any Prince upon Earth is veſted with this exceeding great Power, which many from *Flattery* and *for ſordid Ends* have aſcribed to ſome. Which brings me

me to the Conſideration of the Truth of this Scheme of many *fawning Prieſts*, which will appear to be as *falſe* as it is *pernicious* to the Intereſt of Virtue and Religion in the World. For this Authority of *compelling* People to be of the Magiſtrate's Religion is given him by neither *God* nor *Man:* Not by God, becauſe God by giving him it would inveſt him with a Right of compelling the People to affront and blaſpheme himſelf, and to live *as without God in the World*, if the Civil Magiſtrate ſhould become atheiſtical, which is not *impoſſible*, and ſhould eſtabliſh Idolatry by his Law, which is not *an improbable Suppoſition*. And therefore if this Power belong to him, *Daniel* and the three Children were perverſe and obſtinate Creatures in not obeying the wicked Laws of their Prince which injoin'd them to be Idolaters, and deſerved all the ſevere Puniſhment which was intended againſt them. But theſe and ſuch like Conſequences as theſe, which naturally and unavoidably follow from this Scheme, are horrid and blaſphemous: And therefore that muſt be ſo too, from which they flow.

Therefore to proceed in the Argument, it cannot be veſted in the Civil Magiſtrate by the Conſent of his People, becauſe it is an Authority which they *cannot* give; and they cannot give it, becauſe it is not theirs to give; for they cannot, if they would, conform their own Faith to the Dictates of any one; and they cannot give another Authority to compel them to worſhip God or not to worſhip him as that other Perſon pleaſes, becauſe this would ſuppoſe they can confer an Obligation upon another to make them obey or diſobey the Laws of God or Nature as the Civil Magiſtrate pleaſes, and to worſhip God agreeably or contrary to their own Conſciences. In a Word, for upon ſuch a Point ſo *palpably abſurd* and *monſtrous* as this many Words are unneceſſary, when People inveſt the Civil Magiſtrate with ſuch a Power as this, if they do it at all, they reſign themſelves up to the Will of their Governors, and to any Religion good or bad, or none at all, to any that *Ignorance* or *Ambition* and *Superſtition* has chanced to eſtabliſh in the Countries where they are born and brought up; and the Subjects of *Popiſh* Princes muſt be *Papiſts*, the Subjects of a *Mahometan* Prince muſt be *Mahometans*, the *Chineſe* of the Religion of their Prince, and ſo on round the Globe, for the Command of the Magiſtrate

ſtrate will warrant my Obedience. The Truth is, the *Magiſtrate* muſt chuſe his own Religion for himſelf, and ſo muſt his People do, if they both would obtain the Favour of the great Magiſtrate of the Univerſe. If he differs from them in religious Sentiments, *they* ought not therefore to *riſe up in Rebellion* againſt him, by violent Methods to force him outwardly to embrace their Forms of Faith and Worſhip: Neither ſhould *he* do as much by them. *Succeſsful Seditions and Rebellions* in them may *frighten* him to play the Hypocrite, or, if he will be honeſt and ſincere, to withdraw from them out of their Reach; and his Forces, if ſuperior to theirs, may produce *the ſame Effects* in them: But violent Methods of no Kind can produce Conviction of Mind, true and acceptable Worſhip, and real Religion; this muſt proceed from other Cauſes, or there will be no ſuch thing in Magiſtrate or Subjects.

F. According to this Doctrine of yours, *Acts of Uniformity*, or Laws commanding People to worſhip God in one uniform Manner, go beyond the Power of the Civil Magiſtrate, and may be broken by his Subjects.

S. In ſacred Writ there are ſome Inſtances of *Acts of this very Sort*, and Inſtances too of *a noble Diſregard* of them. Doubtleſs, that is *an Act of Uniformity* which we have paſs'd by *Nebuchadnezzar* the *Babylonian* Emperor, and his Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and all his Commons; and *the Act* runs thus: "To you it is "commanded, O People, Nations and Languages, "that ye fall down and worſhip the Golden Image that "the King has ſet up: And whoſoever falls not down "and worſhips, ſhall the ſame Hour be caſt into the "midſt of a burning fiery Furnace, *Dan.* iii." *Another Act of Uniformity*, and paſs'd by the *ſame Authority*, is that of King *Darius* and his Nobles and Commons, and it is this, "That whoſoever ſhall ask a Pe-"tition of any God or Man for thirty Days, ſave of "thee, O King, he ſhall be caſt into the Den of Li-"ons, *Dan.* vi." In the New Teſtament we have alſo two *Acts of Uniformity*, or rather *Canons* of the *Jewiſh Convocation*, becauſe the *Eccleſiaſticks* were chiefly if not ſolely concern'd in them, the Rulers, Elders and Scribes, the *Jewiſh* Pontiff and his Kindred, i. e. *the upper and lower Houſe of Convocation*; and the Canon was, "That the Apoſtles ſhould not ſpeak at "all,

" all, nor teach in the Name of Jeſus, *Acts* iv." And the ſame Canon is renewed by the ſame Power, *Acts* v. 40. But you need not be told what Account *Daniel* and the three Children and the Apoſtles made of theſe *Acts of Uniformity*, nor that the great and bleſſed God ſhew'd in a miraculous Manner his *perfect Approbation* of their *Nonconformity* to theſe *Acts of Uniformity*, by delivering theſe Schiſmatical Nonconformiſts from the Evils that were deſigned againſt them; for *through Faith*, through the Perſuaſion of their own Minds, and not thro' the publick Faith and Conſcience, *they ſtopped the Mouths of Lions, quenched the Violence of Fire, eſcaped the Edge of the Sword, and put to Flight* the whole Eccleſiaſtical Poſſe, *Heb.* xii. 33, *&c.* Whatever Acts of this kind be paſſed, and by what Authority ſoever, whether they be the Acts of the *Civil Magiſtrate only*, or of *the Civil Magiſtrate and his Clergy*, they muſt be treated *in like Manner* by ſuch as cannot in Conſcience embrace the Creeds and Modes of Worſhip which they injoin; for it is eaſy to reſolve whom we are to obey, *God* or *Man*, *the Law of Nature* or *an Act of Uniformity*, *our own private Conſciences* or *Convocations*. Wherefore, before the Powers of this World ſend forth their *Acts of Uniformity in Religion*, it would be proper to draw up *Acts of Unity of Faith*, and thereby lay their Commands upon the People to believe only one and the ſame Syſtem of Faith; for there is equal Reaſon for Edicts and Laws of this latter, as of the former Kind.

F. But if People be left to follow every Man his own private Judgment, they may be of any Religion, or no Religion, juſt as the Humour takes them, *Papiſts* or *Deiſts*, *Jews* or *Mahometans*, any thing or nothing, and ſtill juſtify themſelves by this Argument, That every Man has a Right to follow his own Judgment in Religion.

S. If a Man be perſuaded in his own Mind, that *Popery* or *Deiſm*, &c. is the Truth, doubtleſs he muſt act as he believes, and there's no poſſible Way of helping it, but by arguing the Caſe with him, and convincing him, in a rational Way, of the Falſhood and Abſurdity of what he believes. The Application indeed of the Allurements and Terrors of this World to him, may probably force him to *recant*, and *outwardly conform* to the eſtabliſhed Faith and Worſhip, and *to cry out*, as loud

loud as any of the orthodox Multitude, *The Temple of the Lord*, &c. or *The Church, the Church are we.* But all this outward Conformity and apparent Orthodoxy will not be, in Reality, worth one Straw to him, while his Conſcience within remonſtrates againſt his Submiſſion to human Authority and Dominion over Conſcience: And all *this outward Change* in the Man is what no body will have any Reaſon to rejoice in, neither he himſelf, nor the Inſtruments of effecting it; for it is a Change all good Men that know it will abhor, and the bleſſed God abominate; for while *a Jew*, for Inſtance, *makes a Chriſtian Profeſſion*, he offers Violence to his own Conſcience, and to all his other Sins adds thoſe of Hypocriſy and a Contempt of God. Therefore if a Man will be a *Jew*, a *Turk*, or a *Pagan*, the beſt way for all Sides, for him and his Adverſaries, is that he be permitted to act according to his Faith; for he is not a Chriſtian who is one outwardly, neither is Baptiſm outward upon the Face. But, let it be obſerved, tho' others are innocent in giving him this Liberty, and do nothing but what they ought, in ſuffering him to profeſs and practiſe according to his own Belief; and tho' he may be innocent thus far in acting according to his Conſcience, yet he may be very guilty before God in being of ſuch a religious Perſuaſion, becauſe this may be owing to Sloth and Prejudice, to Pride and other bad Vices: But of this Guilt God and the Man's own Conſcience muſt judge, and not his Fellow-Creatures, becauſe they cannot be certain what has influenced and biaſſed him in this Way or that, whether his own Weakneſs or his Wickedneſs. If a Man turn *Deiſt* amongſt us, it may not be altogether unlikely that his Infidelity is the Fault of his Will, more than the Effect of his Infirmity and Imperfection of Mind, becauſe the Arguments are ſo plain and convincing, ſo ſtrong and various, which prove the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion; but we cannot be certain this is really the Caſe with him. But let us ſuppoſe it is; the Way to recover him to the Religion of Jeſus, is to lay before him the Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, and not to bring him before Rulers and Councils, to fine and impriſon him; *this* is the moſt effectual Way to continue and eſtabliſh him in a State of Infidelity. If *Paſtoral Letters* and *Vindications* will not convince him that we are in the Right and he in the Wrong, *coercive Methods* will,

will, doubtleſs, ſatisfy him that we are in the Wrong, whatever he be, and will render him more obſtinate in his Infidelity; for this is always, I think, the Effect of Perſecution upon People of any Sincerity in a religious Profeſſion, that it makes them think better of their own Cauſe, and worſe of that of their Perſecutors; and *never* are People *ſo firm* in their Adherence to their own religious Sentiments, as when they meet with ill-natur'd Oppoſition, and the *Body muſt ſuffer* for the Perſuaſion of *the Mind.*

F. But attend, and I will ſhew you a Conſequence from this Doctrine of yours concerning private Judgment, which will not go down eaſily with you. For, if this Doctrine be true, and a Man believe perſecuting others that are not of his Mind in Religion, and killing them for their Faith and religious Practices, is doing God acceptable Service, as the *Jews* formerly and many now believe; according to this Doctrine he muſt be let alone, and ſuffered to ſpread Ruin and Deſtruction all around him, becauſe you ſay he muſt act according to his Conſcience, and his Conſcience teaches him to burn, to cut Throats, and maſſacre all that differ from him in Faith and Worſhip.

S. This is an Objection of ſome Weight, and therefore ſhould not be paſs'd by in Silence. In Anſwer therefore to it, I ſay, conſiſtent with what I have all along been ſaying, that ſuch a Man muſt be hinder'd from acting according to his Conſcience, if his Conſcience dictate to him what you mention, becauſe every one ſhould act according to his own Judgment; but every one cannot, if ſome muſt be maſſacred for it. So that the Reaſon why the Perſon you mention'd muſt be reſtrain'd from acting according to his own Judgment, is becauſe he will not permit others to do ſo. And ſurely if any deſerve to die for Errors of Judgment, he does who thinks they are a ſufficient Reaſon for putting others to Death. And yet I could not wiſh he ſhould be ſerv'd himſelf ſo as he is for ſerving others, but rather that he might be dealt with as a Perſon in Diſtraction; and if he diſcover a murtherous Intention, that human Society would ſuffer him to live as long as it is conſiſtent with the Welfare of the Society he belongs to. But if at length the Welfare of the Society requires his Life from him, let it be obſerved, he will not die merely becauſe

he *was of ſuch an Opinion*, but becauſe *the Practices* conſequent upon it were *deſtructive* to the Society; not becauſe he was *an ill Believer*, but *a Malefactor*; not becauſe he was *miſtaken*, but becauſe he was *a Criminal.* For it is only *an outward Action*, as ſuch, affecting the publick Good, that is the Object of the Magiſtrate's Concern and Enquiry. Speculative Notions therefore, and the Practices conſequent upon them, as long as they have no manner of Influence upon Society, he has nothing to do with.

F. Well, but is not the Peace and Order of the Church moſt deſirable, and what ſo likely to produce and continue Bleſſings ſo deſirable, as Acts of Uniformity and religious Eſtabliſhments? It is certainly an Argument of a factious and turbulent Temper, to make light of them; and they who are of this Temper are as miſchievous in the Church, as Authors of Sedition and Rebellion are in the State.

S. I am, Sir, far from making light of *true Peace* and *neceſſary Order* in the Church, and would have them marked that cauſe Diviſions againſt Reaſon and Revelation. But *falſe Peace* and *worldly Order* in the Church are to be made *no Account* of, tho' they may be of great temporal Advantage to the avaritious and domineering Part of the Church. The Popiſh Inquiſition itſelf is Peace, Quiet, and Order; but what other *Peace* does it produce than *Stupidity and Lethargy, or moſt horrid Hypocriſy and an Uniformity in Perſecutors, Hypocrites and Atheiſts, an Uniformity of Geſtures, Sounds, and of every thing amuſing to the Senſe, but pernicious to the Underſtanding and to the Intereſt of Religion.* And the Confuſion and Anarchy which it prevents, is the Confuſion and Anarchy of worſhipping God in Spirit and Truth, and ſerving him acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear, the Confuſion of Charity and mutual Forbearance of one another in their reſpective Sentiments and religious Practices. Thus are Words abuſed, when *vile* Things are called by *good* Names, and the beſt Things by the worſt of Names. Numerous are the Inſtances of the Abuſe of Words *in both* theſe Ways, in religious Debates and Writings, and this I have taken Notice of is one amongſt the reſt. The *Peace* of the Church often ſignifies nothing elſe than *undiſturbed Dominion* and *ſucceſsful Tyranny* in the Clergy, and *tame Submiſſion* in the Laity, and an implicit Belief of all their

their Dreams and Dictates: And on the contrary, *revolting* from theſe ſpiritual and religious Uſurpers and Tyrants, and judging every Man for himſelf, and looking carefully to his own Soul, *is Schiſm*, *breaking the Church's Peace*, introducing into it Confuſion and Anarchy and every thing that is bad: Thus the Apoſtles *turned all Things upſide down* amongſt the *Jews* and *Heathens*, when they preached againſt the *Superſtition and Hypocriſy* of *one* of theſe Churches, and againſt the *Polytheiſm* and *Idolatry* of the *other*. In *another* Church, poor *Virgilius* was an *Heretick*, and a Breaker of the Peace, for believing the *ſpherical Form* of the Earth, and aſſerting there are *Antipodes*; and every thinking and *honeſt* Man amongſt all Bigots and Hypocrites is a Diſturber of the Church's Peace, when he cannot ſacrifice his Conſcience, and all his Hopes of the divine Favour, to their Superſtition and inſatiable Avarice. I ſhould wonder how endeavouring to ſee with my own Eyes, and to pleaſe God, and to be happy in him, ſhould give any Diſturbance to the Church, did not I know aſſuredly that this Peace is frequently an undiſturbed and profound Lethargy; and that what is moſt pleaſing to God, is the moſt diſpleaſing to the Church of the Superſtitious and Proud. But, as I hinted before, true Peace and Order amongſt Chriſtians are not to be deſpis'd, nor to be diſturbed upon any trifling Occaſion. And ſurely they, of all People, have the leaſt Room for complaining of others for diſturbing the Peace of the Church, *who fall out* with their Fellow-Chriſtians about Things which themſelves own to be *Matters of Indifference*; for they are really Breakers of this Peace, whatever others are; and the Reaſon is plain, becauſe they ſtiffly inſiſt upon Matters which they own to be indifferent, and others cannot think they are ſo. But when we hear ſo much concerning the Peace of the Church from ſome, who do nothing to promote it, it makes us think of thoſe who are ſo ill-humour'd that they will never be pleaſant and ſociable, unleſs they muſt have their own Way and Mind in every Thing. But where is the Reaſon why ſome ſhould be humour'd in every Thing, and others as deſerving of Favour in Nothing? All are, doubtleſs, to contribute as much as they can to promote the Peace and Order of the Church, one Side as well as another.

F. Is not Peace in States and Kingdoms a great Bleſſing, earneſtly to be deſired if wanting, and highly to be valued if enjoyed? And no leſs deſirable is Peace in the Church, and what People ſhould deny themſelves much for, eſpecially when their Superiors command them to be at Peace and Unity.

S. Peace in States and Kingdoms is very *valuable*, if it be *genuine and honourable*; if it be not *ſo*, it is only *Tyranny* in the Magiſtrate, and *Slavery* in the People: But if the Peace of a State be owing to arbitrary and tyrannical Rule in the Prince, and to a ſlaviſh and daſtardly Spirit in the Subjects, there's no great Reaſon for commending it; for a Spirit of Liberty, though not attended with ſo profound a Quiet, is infinitely preferable to Peace ſubſiſting upon theſe Foundations. The ſame is true of Eccleſiaſtical Peace; if it be honourable, it is valuable; if it proceed from Charity and mutual Forbearance, Humility and Goodneſs, nothing upon Earth is ſo deſirable: But if it be the *Effect of proud lordly Sway* and Rule in Prieſts, and of baſe Compliance with them in the People, *it is to be abhorred*, and not deſired, and is abominable to God, whatever it be to his pretended Ambaſſadors and Miniſters. Glorious was it in our Saviour and his Apoſtles to break the Peace in the *Jewiſh* Church, glorious was it in our firſt Reformers to break the Peace in the *Roman* Church, and glorious is it in any, at any Time, to riſe up and break the Peace of a Secular Church, by the *pure Doctrines* of the Goſpel, and by *Chriſtian Practices* only.

F. Our Lord and Saviour, in religious Rites and Ceremonies, and the Obſervance of Days and Times, did not only conform to divine Inſtitutions, but to human Appointments and Uſage in all Things of an indifferent Nature, without diſputing every Inch of his Liberty, and diſturbing the Peace of the *Jewiſh* Church. Do not therefore talk of our Saviour and his Apoſtles breaking Eccleſiaſtical Peace, nor compare their Practice with yours, who are ſo ſcrupulous or ſo obſtinate, that you will do nothing in Compliance with human Authority.

S. But what *human* Inſtitutions did our Saviour comply with in Religion? However, did he ever comply with any *contrary to his own Judgment*, and out of mere Regard to the Authority that fram'd them and injoin'd the Obſervance of them? This is what cannot poſſibly

be

be proved, but this is the thing to be proved by them who talk of his Compliance with human Appointments and Uſages in Religion. And as to his Apoſtles, they were ready to comply with human Inſtitutions, and ſubmit to Matters of Indifference while they were left indifferent, and *to become all things to all Men, that they might gain ſome.* But when Things indifferent were impoſed as Things neceſſary, they would not ſubmit to them, nor be brought under the Power of any. And it is to be hoped there is no Harm in imitating this Example of theirs, tho' it may be called by Names of Ignominy, as Obſtinacy and Peeviſhneſs, Pride and Self-conceit, vain Scrupuloſity and Faction. And certain it is, tho' it may be for the Intereſt of *ſome* to overlook it, or paſs it by in Silence, our Saviour would not endure it in any Men, that they ſhould teach for Doctrines their own or the Commandments of other Men: Nor was it his Will and Pleaſure that his Followers ſhould endure this; but he cautions them againſt it, and ſtrictly commands them to regard him ſolely as the only King and Lawgiver to the Conſciences of Men. And they who pretend our Saviour was ſo very ſubmiſſive to human Authority in Religion, know that he *oppoſed* it himſelf, and commands all his Followers in all Ages *to imitate* him herein.

But to draw to a Concluſion upon this Head; the great Sticklers for human Church-Authority ſhould firſt agree amongſt themſelves about the *Seat* or *Subject* of it, before they make ſo great a Noiſe about it as we have long heard: But ſo it happens, they yet differ as much amongſt themſelves about this Matter, as the *Papiſts* do about the *Subject* of their Infallibility. And *this Church* is for monopolizing this Authority wholly to herſelf, tho' ſhe be not ſatisfied where to lay the Foundation of it, which Foundation is her pretended Infallibility, whether in the Pope or a Council, or in them both blended together: However, ſhe is prudent enough to claim it wholly to herſelf, and not to part with it to *any Rival* as long as ſhe can keep it. And very conſiſtent this Church is in her Claims, for ſhe firſt would have us believe ſhe is *infallible*, and then that ſhe is *the Head* or Miſtreſs of all other Churches. But *many Proteſtants* would go Sharers with her in *Church-Authority*, tho' they pretend not in the leaſt to *Infallibility*, and tho'

they

they cannot tell where to lodge this Church-Authority; for ſome think a General Council has the beſt Right to it, others that a National Council may put in as good a Claim to it, tho' even theſe are not all of a Mind concerning the Members of this National Council, whether all the Eccleſiaſticks of a Nation, or a ſelect Number of the Clergy and Laity ſhould conſtitute it; and ſome are ſo good, that they are for veſting the Pariſh Miniſters with it. One would think, if the Clergy know not who have a Right to the Poſſeſſion of this Authority, they ſhould not be ſo urgent with the Laity to ſubmit to every Pretender to it, leſt they ſhould ſubmit to an Uſurper, and not to the right Owner of it.

Beſides, ſuppoſe it were a Point determined and ſettled unanimouſly amongſt the ſeveral Claimants of this Power, that ſuch a Perſon or Number of Perſons are the right Owners of it, the Laity as yet have no great Encouragement to comply, becauſe the Effects of it, in all Times and Ages, are not very deſirable; witneſs the Decrees and Reſcripts of Councils in general from their Beginning at *Nice* down to the laſt of them; witneſs their *Creeds* and *Conſtitutions*, their *Confeſſions* of Faith and their *Directories*. The firſt of them at *Nice*, for that at *Jeruſalem*, conſiſting of the Apoſtles and Elders, is of *another Sort*; I ſay the firſt Council at *Nice*, as a ſad Preſage of what might be expected from all ſubſequent Councils, was "like an Eccleſiaſtical Cockpit, and a "Man might have laid Wagers either way." And hard will it be to prove "that after this there was properly "ſpeaking any one *free* General Council, which was "not *a mere Imperial* or *Eccleſiaſtical Machine*, put "together, wound up, ſet on going, and let down by "the Direction of the Maſter of it." Any one that reads Church-Hiſtory impartially, will be apt to be of the great *Grotius*'s Mind, which he thus expreſſes, *Qui legit Hiſtoriam Eccleſiaſticam, quid legit niſi Vitia Epiſcoporum? What does Church-Hiſtory contain but an Account of the Villainies of the Biſhops?* And he will be ready to think as *Nazianzen* did, that little or no Good is to be expected from theſe Conventions of Men in holy Orders. The Subject-Matter of their Debates and Decrees is ſcarce ever any thing conducive to the Intereſt of ſubſtantial Religion, but frequently ſomething very pernicious to it; nothing ſcarce but hard Words, technical Terms, Points

of

of mere Speculation and abſtruſe Queſtions, Rites and Ceremonies, their own Dreams and Reveries: For theſe they aſſembled themſelves together, and invoked the Preſence and Aſſiſtance of the ſacred and bleſſed Spirit; they excommunicated and anathematiz'd, they depoſed and expelled and baniſhed, they committed Violence and Rapine, Cruelty and Barbarities upon Gainſayers; and there have been Councils againſt Councils, and the ſame Biſhops againſt themſelves. What has this *Conciliar Authority* done ever ſince the firſt beginning of it, but either fram'd *myſtical and unintelligible*, or *ſenſeleſs* and *abſurd Articles* of Faith, and *invented ludicrous and ridiculous* Rites of Worſhip, and drawn up *cruel Canons* and *Acts of Uniformity?* It is undeniable it has produced little elſe; and the Good it has done is nothing to the Miſchief it has been the Cauſe and Engine of in the Chriſtian Church: It has made ſome Prieſts more *proud and lordly* than ever, and others poor and miſerable, becauſe they had too much Integrity and Judgment to ſubmit to it; the Laity it has ſet together by the Ears, and inſpired ſome with Cruelty againſt others that could not bow down and worſhip it. *This* has been the grand Source of *Schiſms* and *Hereſies*; this has often curſed them whom God has bleſſed, and bleſſed thoſe whom he has curſed: It has from its Beginning breath'd Death and Damnation againſt all Oppoſers, and been always in the Right tho' ever ſo much in the Wrong, always inſpired and infallible tho' very much miſtaken, and always merciful in its Sentences tho' cruel in the Execution of them to the laſt Degree, making Men not only miſerable in this Life, but cutting them off from all Hope of Happineſs in the other: And the Laity are much afraid that it will ſtill be juſt as infallible and compaſſionate as it has been, always *infallible* and *miſtaken*, *good-natur'd* and *cruel*; and therefore they earneſtly pray they may not be required to ſubmit to it, unleſs they may have ſufficient Security given them, either that it will not contradict their Judgment, or that they be permitted with Safety to contradict its Deciſions. Upon theſe Conditions alone they promiſe to ſubmit to it, and aſſure the Reverend Prieſthood, that it is all one to them who get into the Poſſeſſion of it, if they may be ſecured from its dreadful Influences. Let but theſe Conditions be agreed to, they will ſtand by and ſee the

ſeveral Pretenders contend, and hear them diſpute and wrangle, and with Pleaſure wait for the Iſſue, and ſubmit to the Conquerors.

F. You ſeem then to render the Miniſters of Religion an unneceſſary Order of Men at beſt, notwithſtanding all their Learning, their Divinity, and their Prieſtly Power.

S. As to many, many of them now dead and gone, it is too true that they were the *moſt miſchievous* Order of Men, and the greateſt Bane to Religion and ſocial Happineſs, *Corrupters* of the *Faith* and *Morals* too of their Fellow-Creatures. Strange Doctrines, contrary to common Senſe, and deſtructive of Virtue, they have taught, and done a world of Miſchief amongſt their Fellow-Men with their peculiar Whimſies and Inventions, which they have impoſed for Truth and Goſpel, by all the ſhocking Methods of Perſecution: And by their Examples, they have rendered their Preaching, *ſo much* of it as *was worth any thing*, uſeleſs. It is not to tell how little Good and how much Miſchief they have done one way and another: And is there not the old Leaven of Malice and Pride, of Avarice and Love of Domination in many now living? So that Thanks are due not to them, but to the Civil Magiſtrate in many Places, that they are ſo harmleſs.

But yet no conſidering and well-diſpoſed Mind could wiſh the whole Order put down, and *quite broken* and ſet aſide. Indeed were they all alike, it would be beſt for human Societies and Commonwealths to diſrobe and eject them: But ſince ſeveral of them believe the Goſpel they preach, obey him whoſe Servants they pretend to be, and are good Livers as well as good Preachers; theſe are great Bleſſings, and ſhould not be reſtrain'd from diſcharging the Duties of their Function, though their *Faith* prove to be *unfaſhionable* and unpopular, and the Form of *Worſhip* they beſt approve not ſo *ritual and ceremonious as that of others*. Yet even learned and virtuous Miniſters, though highly to be valued, muſt not be ſet up as ſpiritual Lords over us; for Learning does not intitle them, or any one elſe, to that Authority over us which we have under Conſideration; for then it would follow, that the moſt learned Men, whether of the Clergy or Laity, whether *Turks* or *Chriſtians*, muſt be Lords over our Conſciences; a learned *Jew* or *Pagan* muſt

muſt be a Creed-Maker, and magiſterially dictate to us how we muſt worſhip God, or whether we muſt worſhip him or no. Neither let it be thought that Piety and Learning, together with Prieſt's Orders, do qualify the Prieſthood for exerciſing this Authority over us, nor that the Miniſters of Religion will be an unneceſſary and uſeleſs Order of Men without it; for tho' they tell us Laity only what we know, and put us in mind of it, and urge us by known Topicks and Arguments to the Practice of our Duty to God and Man, it will be Work enough for them. And *this*, and *nothing elſe*, is really *their Buſineſs*, to lay before us the Chriſtian Law, and perſuade us to Obedience to it; to be Helpers of our Faith and Joy, and every Chriſtian Grace and Virtue, but not to lord it over our Conſciences; to contend for the Faith once delivered to the primitive Saints by the Apoſtles, but not to make new Creeds, and deliver and contend for them. And would they but conſider how neceſſary a firm Belief of the Chriſtian Doctrine and Obedience to the Chriſtian Law is, they would not be ſo ſet upon having Dominion over our Faith as many of them are, nor beſtow all their Zeal upon the Conceits and Whimſies of a proud and aſpiring Prieſthood.

In fine, neither the Civil Magiſtrate has any Right to chooſe what Religion his Subjects ſhall be of, and by coercive Methods to conſtrain them to be of his Perſuaſion, or rather his Profeſſion in Religion: Neither is there this Right, or any thing like it, in the Civil Magiſtrate and his Reverend Clergy conjunctly: But every Man, every where, amongſt Papiſts and Proteſtants, amongſt Chriſtians and Heathens, muſt judge for himſelf in Matters of Religion, and ought to have Liberty to follow his Judgment and Conſcience, though it ſhould dictate different to the publick Wiſdom and Conſcience.

Now the Conſequence from all this is, that my Separation from the eſtabliſh'd Church is not Schiſm, becauſe it is not an unneceſſary Separation; and it is not an unneceſſary Separation, becauſe it is neceſſary for me to act according to my own Apprehenſions of Things. Nor is my Separation from your Church an uncharitable Separation; for tho' I do not and cannot like it ſo well as that Church I now belong to, I have, notwithſtanding, a great Value for many in the Eſtabliſhment for their Learning and Piety, and no more doubt whether

they may be ſaved, than whether I myſelf may in that Communion which I have embraced.

Suppoſe that, from new Apprehenſions of Things, I ſhould forſake the *Presbyterians*, and go over to the *Baptiſts* or *Quakers*, you would not therefore call me a Schiſmatick for ſuch a Change of Opinion and Practice; and no more Reaſon is there for my being called a Schiſmatick only for my leaving the Church of *England*.

F. I hope you make ſome Difference betwixt our Church and the Factions of *Baptiſts*, *Quakers*, or any ſuch Sectaries. What, muſt we, with all our Biſhops, and the King too, be compared to them?

S. It is allowable ſometimes *parva componere magnis*, and doubtleſs in this Caſe it is ſo: True, you have the Civil Magiſtrate and the dignify'd and wealthy Clergy upon your Side: But it does not therefore follow, that we muſt be of that Party which ſits under the Shadow of their Wings. The *Jews* who oppoſed Chriſt and his Doctrine, his Apoſtles, and their preaching his Goſpel, and who at laſt crucified the Lord of Life, had as much to ſay as this, and actually did ſay it, when they put that Queſtion, *Have any of the Rulers or Phariſees believed on him?* The Heathens, who were the Authors of the grievous Perſecutions the primitive Chriſtians met with, wanted not this Argument for themſelves and their Religion. The Papiſts, in many *European* Countries, can ſay the ſame. And cannot the *Mahometans* and *Heathens*, in their reſpective Countries, make the very ſame Objection againſt all Diſſenters and Nonconformiſts amongſt them? Therefore this Argument, which equally ſerves all Parties, as they riſe and get uppermoſt, in reality is of no Service to any Party. The Great and Learned have no more Right to lord it over the Conſciences of the Mean and Illiterate, than theſe have to lord it over them; nor Conformiſts in any Country to preſcribe in Matters of Religion to Nonconformiſts, than theſe have to do as much for them. It is the Right, and the unalienable Right of every Man, poor and rich, learned or unlearned, a Conformiſt or a Nonconformiſt, to judge for himſelf, as I have already ſufficiently proved from the Light of our Reaſon. And ſtrange is it, that not only Men that have Reaſon, but Chriſtians that have a Revelation from Heaven, ſhould ever call this Right into queſtion, and be for an Infringement of it, ſince the Apoſtle *Paul* has made it ſo clear and plain, that

that there cannot be any reaſonable Doubt about it. *Who art thou*, ſays he, *that judgeſt another Man's Servant*, and thy own Brother, who muſt ſtand or fall not to thee his Brother and Fellow-Servant, but unto his Saviour and God? Wherefore, he adds, *Let every Man be fully perſuaded in his own Mind.* Thus he both aſſerts his Right, and rebukes every proud Uſurper that dares to invade and break in upon it. Even for a *weak* and *miſtaken* Chriſtian he expreſsly claims this Right, and teaches us that he muſt act according to his own Conſcience againſt all Impoſition whatever, tho' he be in a Miſtake. *I know and am perſuaded*, ſays he, *by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of itſelf; but to him that eſteems any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. And he that doubts, is damned if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of Faith; for whatever is not of Faith is Sin.* So great is the Authority of Conſcience to a Perſon, and ſo little is the Authority of Men over the Conſciences of others. And not only may we, but we muſt uſe this Right of judging for ourſelves in Religion; for God tells us, that we muſt hear his Son; and Jeſus ſays, we muſt not any of us be called *Rabbi*; for himſelf is our Maſter, and we are Brethren. Therefore no Objection againſt this Right can be ſtarted, which is of any Importance, becauſe it is evidently an indiſputable and unalienable Right. It is to no Purpoſe to ſay, that the Generality of People are not fit to judge for themſelves, or that a Diverſity of wild Opinions in Religion will be the Effect of putting this Doctrine in Practice, for People muſt judge as well as they can; and becauſe God requires no more of them, Men ſhould not; and when they do this, their *involuntary Miſtakes* will be *innocent Errors*, and every whit as pleaſing to the all-perfect God as accidental Orthodoxy, or as believing that which is true out of regard to Men only.

I hope now I have cleared myſelf from the Charge of Schiſm, by ſhewing every Man ſhould worſhip God in that Way which is moſt agreeable to his own Judgment, whatever it be to the Judgment of others. Upon *this Foot* Lay-Nonconformity not only to *our own*, but to *all Church-Eſtabliſhments* may be juſtified. But how much more may be offered in Vindication of the Nonconformity of thoſe you call *Diſſenting Teachers*, ſince they muſt not be allowed to diſcharge the Duties of Chriſtian Paſtors and Teachers in the Eſtabliſh'd Church,

without declaring they believe what they cannot believe? In fine, I lay this down as a plain and unqueſtionable Truth, that there may be Separation from an eſtabliſh'd Church without Schiſm; and there may be Schiſm, or ſomething very like it, without this Separation. The former Part of this Propoſition has been already clearly proved; and the latter, with your Leave and Patience, I ſhall ſay ſomething of.

F. Aye, will you not only clear yourſelf, but condemn us? Be adviſed to purge yourſelf, without charging thoſe you intend with Schiſm. But this is the Manner of ſcandalous People, to charge thoſe who reprove them, with the ſame or greater Faults than their own are. However, let us have this Something of yours concerning Schiſm without an actual Separation.

S. You ſeem to miſapprehend, Sir, the Deſign of what I have to ſay upon this Matter, which is not to prove this or that particular Party guilty of Schiſm or ſomething tantamount; but to ſhew in general of all Sects, that this is their Fault, be they who they will, that lay the Foundation for a neceſſary Separation from them. And this they do, whoever they are, who endeavour to deprive Chriſtian People of their Right of private Judgment, and ſet themſelves up for Creed-Makers, and require others to believe them when they cannot, and impoſe Modes of divine Worſhip of their own Invention upon ſuch as cannot in Conſcience comply with them. When this is the Caſe, the Impoſers of their own Articles of Faith, and of their own Modes of Worſhip, make it neceſſary for Diſſenters from them, to leave them and worſhip God according to their own Conſciences, unleſs they may worſhip him contrary to their own Conſciences, or may not worſhip him at all; neither of which no proud Invaders of Chriſt's Authority, who is the ſole King in his Church, and *no Eccleſiaſtical Tyrants* will *ſay*, whatever they may *inwardly think*; becauſe it would be abominable Hypocriſy and Wickedneſs for any Chriſtian People, out of Complaiſance or Slavery to wealthy Prieſts and tyrannical Princes, to declare they believe what they do not believe, and to offer that Worſhip to God which they believe is not acceptable to him: But for them to oppoſe this proud and wicked Spirit of Impoſition, in a Chriſtian Manner, would not be Schiſm and Faction, but only making a noble Stand againſt ſpiritual Uſurpation and Tyranny, and an Inſtance of Chriſtian

Chriſtian Bravery and Fortitude highly pleaſing to God, tho' it might cut his pretended Ambaſſadors to the Heart. I ſhall mention only *two Inſtances* of this Kind, out of two Thouſand and more in Church-Hiſtory, to make this plain and undeniable to any that will not ſhut their Eyes: One relates to the ſecond Council at *Nice*, the other to the Church of *Rome*. With Regard to *that Council*, it was wicked in it to decree that Image-Worſhip ſhould be ſet up, and it was glorious in others to diſregard and diſobey their Decree, tho' they were ſo uncharitable as to cry out *Damnation to all Hereticks, Damnation to the Council that roars againſt the venerable Images! The Holy Trinity has depoſed them.* As to the *Church of Rome*, our beſt Writers fully clear us from the Guilt of Schiſm in our Departure from them, and prove not we, but they are Schiſmaticks, becauſe they made it neceſſary for us to leave them, by impoſing upon us things impoſſible to be believed and unlawful to be done, as Terms of Communion with them. And ſhould any Party, ſhould that I am now in Chriſtian Communion with, imitate ſuch an Example as this, moſt certainly they would be to blame, and not I, ſhould I alſo forſake them, and forſake them I would for this as ſoon as any others.

F. We have inſiſted long upon this Head, yet there is an Objection or two behind, which I hope will overthrow all you have been ſaying againſt Religious Eſtabliſhments, and for moderate and conſcientious Nonconformity to them, as your Party love to ſpeak. One is, that all Bodies Politick have a natural, inherent, and indiſputable Right to unite together for ſuch Purpoſes as appear to them convenient, and to make ſuch Laws as they judge proper; and the Minority in all Societies muſt be determined by the Concluſions of the Majority, otherwiſe no Society can ſubſiſt. Therefore if the Society, or the Majority of it, think ſuch or ſuch an Eſtabliſhment of Religion be neceſſary for their own Welfare, the Minority muſt ſubmit to it.

S. This is in Reality, tho' not in the very ſame Words, the Scheme which we have been conſidering all along, and which has been already confuted. However, I ſhall add, that the Queſtion which here ariſes and offers itſelf to Conſideration, is this, Whether Men, when they gather together and form themſelves into Bodies politick, have a Right as a Society to eſtabliſh Iniquity

by

by a Law, to make it lawful, if they think it, for their Members to thieve, ſteal, have a Community of Wives, encourage Fornication, &c. becauſe theſe and other Vices have by ſome been judged publick Benefits? Or, Whether they have a Right to make Men play the Hypocrite, mock God, and be perjured, by ſwearing they believe what they do not, and worſhipping God in a Way they think is diſpleaſing to him? None, not even *they* who make light of religious Subſcriptions to Creeds and Articles, and of religious Oaths, and can conform to any Eſtabliſhment of Religion, will, however, *aſſert* there is this natural, inherent Right in any Society. If then there be not, what I have been all this while pleading and arguing for muſt be granted, which is, that every Man, in all Societies, has a natural inherent and unalienable Right to conform or not conform to religious Eſtabliſhments, juſt as his own Judgment and Conſcience direct him. Every Society has a Right, as it is a Society, to form ſuch Conſtitutions as are really for the Benefit of the Society; but it is not, as I ſhall hereafter ſhew, for the Benefit of a Society to hinder any of its Body from judging for themſelves, and acting in Religion according to the beſt of their Judgment; therefore it ſhould not make any Laws that have this Tendency.

F. But they who deny the Majority of a Society or the Civil Magiſtrate has any Right to eſtabliſh Religion, muſt deny he has a Right to eſtabliſh the Virtues of Converſation and Society by Laws, becauſe Religion is as neceſſary to the Welfare of the Society as Social Virtues: But it is abſurd to deny he has a Right to eſtabliſh theſe; it muſt therefore be equally ſo, to deny he has a Right to do that too. This is my other Objection againſt your Scheme of Nonconformity to all religious Eſtabliſhments, and an Objection wherewith ſome of our Church have defeated and routed the Champions for Nonconformity. Let us hear what you have to ſay to it.

S. The Champions you mention are not ſo afraid of this Weapon as ſome have imagined them to be, for indeed they look upon it only as a Wooden Dagger that will do no great Execution. For tho' the Inventor, or rather the Repairer and Furbiſher of it, perhaps impair'd his Health, and did himſelf real Diſgrace by the great Pains he beſtowed upon it, his Adverſaries have not yet felt any Harm from it. But not to purſue the Metaphor any farther, *real Religion* is of great Advantage to Human

man Society, and Pity it is it ſhould languiſh and droop in any Commonwealth: But it is undeniable, there's a mighty Difference betwixt *Religion* and *Superſtition*, *Devotion* and *Hypocriſy*, *Faith* and only a *mere Profeſſion* of it, between *real Religion* and the *external Forms* of it; and a vaſt Difference too between the Effects and Influence of the former and that of the latter upon Human Societies. Real Religion, which conſiſts in a real Belief of its great Principles, in a deep Veneration for the Deity, and in ſupreme Delight in him, this has inconteſtably a benign Influence upon Society, as it tends to make all its Members do to others as they would be done unto, to love every Man his Neighbour as himſelf, and promote from a noble Principle of an univerſal Benevolence the Good of the Community, as an Intereſt of much greater Importance than any private and particular Intereſt whatever. But mere external Religion has no manner of Influence upon the Society for its Good: For Inſtance, what Service does the *Papiſt* to the Society he belongs to, by profeſſing his Belief of the Pope's Infallibility and Supremacy, the Exiſtence of Purgatory and other Popiſh Articles of Faith, and by confeſſing to the Prieſt, worſhipping Images, dead Bodies and Relicks, and ſaying Maſs? I would gladly know what better Society is for all this, whether any better for it than he is for being ſprinkled with holy Water? And of what Advantage to our Commonwealth is a Subſcription to the 39 Articles, profeſſing a Belief of them, and of the *Athanaſian* Creed, and of the Deſcent of Chriſt into Hell, and bowing at the Name of Jeſus, worſhipping towards the Eaſt rather than towards the Weſt, ſtanding while the Goſpels are read, and ſitting at the reading of the Epiſtles, reading ſome Prayers in the Desk, and others in the Chancel, ſigning with the Sign of the Croſs, and the *Whole* of that which is called *Divine Service* amongſt us? Once more: What Service to the Society is praying and preaching without Book, omitting the Sign of the Croſs in Baptiſm, ſitting at the Sacrament rather than kneeling, wearing a Black Coat inſtead of Surplices with Sleeves on? *Theſe Things*, tho' they may flow from inward Principles of Faith, and the Fear and Love of God and Goodneſs, have *no Influence* worth mentioning upon the Happineſs of Society, if they be conſidered purely in themſelves. Nay, not even *Real and Vital Religion*, conſidered abſtractly in itſelf and apart from Social Virtues, is *ſo neceſſary* to Human Society

ety as *Social Virtues*, becauſe human Societies may ſubſiſt without Religion properly and ſtrictly ſpeaking, but not without Social Virtues; and becauſe it is a Matter of Fact that cannot be denied, that there are ſeveral irreligious Perſons in Societies, who nevertheleſs are uſeful Members in them, and more ſo than ſome who are in Reality religious. Of much leſs Importance then to human Society are external Forms and Profeſſions, proceeding not from Faith but from Hypocriſy, not from Devotion but from Avarice and the Luſt of Domination; nay, ſuch a Religion as this in the whole Notion of it, with its Cauſes and Effects, is to be dreaded and not deſired by a Society, as it is vile in itſelf and its Cauſes, and tends to provoke the great Magiſtrate of the Univerſe, and ſet him againſt that Society which encourages and promotes it, and has it abounding much in it. Therefore, ſince ſubſcribing Creeds without believing them, and uſing Modes of Worſhip without approving them, is Hypocriſy and Iniquity; and eſtabliſhing theſe external Actions is not a proper Means at all of promoting true Religion, but much rather of Irreligion; it follows *they ought not* to be eſtabliſhed by Law, *as Moral and Social Virtues* ought, becauſe *theſe are* of abſolute Neceſſity to the Being of Society, but *thoſe are not*. No, it does not follow in the Nature and Reaſon or the Probability of the thing, that a Man will therefore be an uſeful Member of Society, becauſe he outwardly conforms to a religious Eſtabliſhment; notwithſtanding his religious Subſcriptions, Oaths, Confeſſion of the National Faith, and his performing all the Parts of the eſtabliſhed Religion, he may do all he can to deſtroy the Society, and build a Fortune upon its Ruins: But Truth and Honeſty, Juſtice and Induſtry, *&c.* are eſſential to the Exiſtence as well as the Happineſs of Societies; and *one* that is a good Neighbour, fair in his Dealings and Commerce, true to his Word, and of a Behaviour proper to his Station in the Society, is to be preferr'd by his Fellow-Citizens to a *thouſand ſuperſtitious Bigots* who place Religion in what is prejudicial to the Welfare of their Fellow-Men; and ought to be valued by them as a human Society, whether he be a *Chriſtian*, a *Deiſt*, or a *Mahometan*, of a falſe Religion, or of no Religion. But to prevent all Cavilling, I ſhall repeat it again, that they may not forget it that wou'd, That Religion in Truth and Reality is very deſirable in a Commonwealth, as it tends to recommend

the Society to the Favour of the great Magiſtrate of the Univerſe.

F. Enough of all this concerning Church Eſtabliſhments, Nonconformity to them, and private Judgment; in favour of the laſt of which, I own, much that is plauſible, popular, and indeed not eaſy to be confuted, may be offered. I ſhall therefore proceed to what relates to the Diſſenting Teachers themſelves.

PART II. *Concerning the Diſſenting Teachers.*

F. My Objections againſt them are, that comparatively *they* are Men of *ſcarce any Letters, without Holy Orders, and ſneaking in their Behaviour* amongſt their own Party, becauſe they depend upon their People for a Maintenance. Probably in the Courſe of our Converſation I may have ſomething further to object againſt them, but here's enough at preſent for you to anſwer.

S. It is much eaſier to call a Set of Men foul Names than prove they deſerve them; and this is the Caſe, I hope, with regard to theſe Men. That it may appear to be ſo, give me leave diſtinctly to conſider what is laid to their Charge. And to begin with their *Learning*, or rather *their Want* of it; it happens well, that this is ſaid of them only or principally by the moſt unlearned of their Adverſaries amongſt the Clergy and Laity. The moſt learned, and judicious, and valuable of the Clergy in the Eſtabliſhment know very well, that they are another ſort of Men than they are repreſented generally by the ignorant and ill-natur'd Prieſts, and their blind Followers. Dr. *Nichols himſelf*, who was forward enough to depretiate them, and whoſe Defence of the Church of *England* is reckon'd a Maſter-Piece in its Kind, yet thus expreſſes himſelf of this Set of Men: "*Omnia* "*fere dicere ornatè, & preſsè, & ſobriè, nihil denique lo-*"*qui niſi quod gravi Viro & Homine Theologo dignum* "*ſit, & Eccleſiaſtici Cœtûs Dignitati conſentaneum*; i. e. "They expreſs almoſt every thing elegantly, pithily, "and adviſedly, and deliver nothing but what may be-"come a grave Perſon and a Divine, and proper for an "Eccleſiaſtical Aſſembly." This is a Teſtimony in their Favour, given by a learned Adverſary, and therefore to be regarded: Whereas, that mean Opinion ſome expreſs of this Set of Men and their Learning, is not much to be heeded; becauſe they who ſpeak ſo contemptibly of them, have never, it may be preſumed,

try'd them, nor are *very forward to make a Tryal* for their own Satisfaction, or to do them Juſtice whom they miſrepreſent. For how ſhould it come to paſs, that they are a Company of ſuch unlearned and ignorant Creatures? They are born, we may be allowed to ſuppoſe, with the ſame natural Capacities that others bring with them into the World, ſo that this Ignorance and Stupidity of theirs is not peculiarly natural to them. In their Youth, they learn as much of the Languages in Grammar-Schools as others, and are as much in earneſt in their Purſuit after this Branch of Learning as their Neighbours. And then they remove to publick Univerſities Abroad, or to private Academies at Home, where they go through the ſame Parts of Learning, and perform the ſame Exerciſes as are taught and performed in our own Univerſities. Indeed they do not all of them ſpend *ſeven Years* at an Univerſity or an Academy, becauſe there is not a Neceſſity for ſo much Time to go through a Courſe of Philoſophy and ſome Syſtems of Divinity; but they generally tarry *three Years*, and ſeveral of them longer in theſe Places of Education, and *ſtudy as hard*, and mind their Buſineſs as cloſe as the *Oxonians* or *Cantabrigians*. And if they cannot attain a competent Acquaintance with the common Syſtems of Philoſophy and Divinity in the Compaſs of three Years and more, by the Aſſiſtance of their Tutors and their own Diligence, there muſt be ſome peculiar natural Unhappineſs in their deſcending from the Diſſenters. Once more; they who deride them for their Ignorance and Want of Learning, would, no doubt, be of another Mind, if they would either converſe with them, or occaſionally nonconform and hear their publick Performances in the Pulpit.

But it is notorious to the learned World, that theſe Men are not all illiterate and merely Gifted Brethren; their printed Works, their Sermons, and their Defences not only of Nonconformity, but of Chriſtianity, their Paraphraſes upon the ſacred Writings, and other Works of theirs, ſhew ſome of them at leaſt are as well acquainted with good Literature, Books and Things, as almoſt any of their Countrymen. Indeed they are not all alike, no more are any other Body of learned Men; but I am told none of them *run directly from a Grammar-School into a Pulpit*, as *ſeveral Clergymen* in the Eſtabliſhment *do*. And now that we are upon this Subject

ject relating to the Learning of the Diſſenting Teachers, let us conſider that of their Adverſaries: Of whom there are ſeveral, as I have been hinting, who have no Learning before they enter into Orders, but ſuch as our common Grammar-Schools afford. And of many that have had an Univerſity-Education, and been brought up at the Feet of the *Gamaliels* there, Biſhop *Burnet* thus ſpeaks: "The much greater Part of thoſe who come to be ordained, are ignorant to a Degree not to be apprehended by thoſe who are not obliged to know it. The *eaſieſt Part* of Knowledge is that to which they are the *greateſt Strangers*, I mean the plaineſt Parts of the holy Scriptures, which they ſay in excuſe of their Ignorance, that their Tutors in the Univerſities never mention the reading of them to them; ſo that they can give *no Account*, or at leaſt a very imperfect one, *of the Contents* of the Goſpels. Thoſe who have read *ſome* Books, yet never ſeem to have read the *Holy Scriptures*. Many cannot give even *a tolerable Account* of *the Catechiſm itſelf*, how ſhort and plain ſoever. They cry and think it a ſad Diſgrace to be denied Holy Orders, tho' the Ignorance of ſome of them *is ſuch*, that in a well regulated State of Things they would appear *not knowing enough* to be admitted *to the Holy Sacrament.*" This is a Character of their Adverſaries, given by one neither unacquainted with thoſe he characterizes, nor willing to miſrepreſent them; one who was a wiſe, a learned and pious Biſhop, and obliged, as he expreſſes it, to know this to be true which he publiſhes to the World: Whereas the Contempt caſt upon the Learning of the Diſſenting *Teachers* comes not from Men who have examined them, and can ſpeak from their own perſonal Knowledge, but from Men who ſpeak only *from Suppoſition* and Hear-ſay, not to mention *any thing worſe*. But enough of this Matter, of which I have been compelled, contrary to my own Inclination, to ſay ſo much. There are, doubtleſs, learned Men amongſt Conformiſts and Nonconformiſts, and Learning is not a Stranger *to Conventicles* any more than *to Cathedrals*, and may be attained *in Academies* as well as *in Univerſities*. And tho' we value Learning, yet this is far from being *the main Qualification* of a Miniſter of Religion; there is one *far ſuperior* to it, which is a virtuous Diſpoſition of Mind, with which a Man may be a valuable Clergyman, and do much Ser-

vice as ſuch, tho' he has not gone thro' a Set of the Claſſicks, thro' the common Syſtems of Philoſophy and Divinity, and be not a Maſter of the *Ars Critica:* But the *greateſt Stock* of Learning, *without a virtuous* Diſpoſition and Temper, is not likely to render a Man fit for the Prieſtly Function. It is well known, that our Saviour did not inſiſt upon the Learning of his Time as a neceſſary Qualification of an Apoſtle, or of an Evangeliſt, or a Biſhop, but choſe illiterate Mechanicks, but ſincere and well-diſpoſed Men for his Apoſtles and prime Miniſters; and the Apoſtle *Paul*, in his Account of a Biſhop, or a Miniſter of Religion, ſays not one Word of human Learning, but inſiſts only upon virtuous Diſpoſitions and a virtuous Life. And in the Nature of Things, a virtuous Temper is the beſt Preſervative againſt religious Errors, and the beſt Qualification for finding out divine Truth; for in the Purſuit of Knowledge of any kind, *the beſt Help* for attaining it, *is a Genius and Temper ſuitable* and connatural to it, and to religious Knowledge the moſt; nay, the only ſuitable Temper is a religious one. For which Reaſon our Saviour aſſures us, that he who does the Will of his Father, ſhall know of the Doctrine Jeſus preached, whether it was true or falſe. Wherefore, if the Learned *be not* under the Dominion of evil Luſts and Affections, of Pride and Prejudice, Self-Conceit and Avarice, and ſuch like vile Tempers, which darken the Mind and obſcure the Underſtanding, they *are as likely as others* to find out Chriſtian Truths; but if theſe ſinful Diſpoſitions draw a Cloud over *their Minds*, the humble and ſincere, the virtuous and religious, tho' unlearned *Vulgar* are much *better* furniſhed and qualified for avoiding pernicious Errors and diſcovering the Truth, *than* the wiſe and learned, the reverend Doctors and Diſputers of this World, with all their Languages, their Philoſophical and Theological Syſtems; for Divinity is *a practical*, not *a ſpeculative* Science. And let the impartial and ſenſible Part of the World judge, whether the Diſſenting Teachers be the leaſt of all Prieſts qualified *this Way* for the Service of the Altar. For my own Part, I ſhould chuſe to hear a *plain*, *honeſt* and ſenſible, tho' an unlearned Man teach or preach in a publick worſhipping Society, rather than a proud and vicious Man with ever ſo many *great Titles*, verſed in the Oriental Languages, a Maſter at School-Sophiſtry and Wrangling, and habited in his Canonical Veſt-

Veſtments. Yet, as was ſaid before, Learning ſhould *not be deſpiſed*, as it is by ſome zealous Enthuſiaſts; neither ſhould it be *over-valued*, as it is by ſome Pedants and School-Men: I am not for being a Diſciple of ſome Gifted Brother, nor a Believer in a learned Doctor; but am pleading the Cauſe of *a Set* of Men, who in general are both learned and virtuous, tho' not ſo well rewarded for their Learning as *ſome minute Scholars* and Philoſophers and Divines are, by Royal Munificence and Bounties.

F. Well, but to let their Learning paſs for what it will, they are without *regular and valid Orders*, and therefore the beſt that you or any can ſay for them is, that they are learned Laymen; therefore their Baptiſm, and all they do as Miniſters or Prieſts, is invalid, becauſe it is not Learning nor Piety, but a regular and valid Ordination that conſtitutes a Prieſt.

S. I know amongſt ſome there is a great Stir about *regular Ordination*, and the Neceſſity of an *uninterrupted Succeſſion* of valid Orders is a darling Notion, and a prodigious Streſs is laid upon it, as it enables the Prieſt, according to ſome, to immortalize a Soul that is mortal of itſelf. The Notion is this, that no Man can be a Miniſter of Religion and a genuine Son of the Church, unleſs he deſcends in a right Line from one or other of the Apoſtles. But this Whim is ſo ſilly and ridiculous, that plain and honeſt Laymen cannot but laugh at it; and a *Notion as idle* and contrary to common Senſe with regard to Religion, as the *Patriarchal Scheme* is in Politicks; for it is impoſſible for any one to prove of himſelf, or of a Brother-Clergyman, that he deſcends in this Line; for ſince his Holy Orders came thro' the Church of *Rome* before they came to him, he cannot be ſure they proceeded down to him in a right Channel, becauſe there were two or three Popes at once. How ſhould he tell, that his Ordainer was in right Orders, and the Ordainer of his Ordainer, and ſo backward as far as the Apoſtolick Age; and that there was in no Branch of his Pedigree no falſe Baptiſm, no Simony or Forgery in any of his Eccleſiaſtical Anceſtors, from his ſpiritual Father backward thro' ſeventeen Centuries? For if there happen any where in the Way to be any ſmall Defect, the Line is broken, the Succeſſion interrupted, and regular Orders are ſtopp'd ſhort of him. A *hopeful Scheme*, and yet *not abſurd enough* to be rejected by ſome Eccleſiaſticks!

ſticks! Well, ſince this is too viſionary and fantaſtical to be regarded by People of only common Senſe, it muſt be given up, and actually is rejected by all in their right Wits, whoſe Heads are not affected with the airy Notions of Church-Power, an indelible Character, and other ſuch Fancies of ſome grave and Reverend Perſons. And let us enquire what Ordination really is: Why, it is *a Declaration* of the Ordainers, that the Perſon they ordain is in their Opinion qualified for the Office of a Deacon or a Prieſt. Our firſt Ordainers looked upon it, ſeveral of them, to be only a prudential Method for Admiſſion into the Prieſt's Office, and were of Opinion, that it is not peculiar to Biſhops or any Eccleſiaſticks to ordain, but that this belonged as well to the Civil Magiſtrate. And if the Matter be conſider'd, it will not appear odd that he or any of the Laity, who are competent Judges of the Qualifications of a Prieſt or Biſhop mentioned by St. *Paul*, may ordain as well as the Prieſts themſelves. Nay, *a formal Ordination* by the Prieſthood or Magiſtrate is *not of abſolute Neceſſity* for conſtituting a Perſon a Miniſter of Religion. Church-Hiſtory informs us of ſome who acted as ſuch, and were reckon'd by others to be ſo, who yet were not formally ordain'd either by Prieſts or others. And ſuppoſe a Number of Lay-Chriſtians be caſt upon ſome diſtant Shore in a Pagan Country, without a Biſhop or Prieſt or Deacon, muſt there be no Baptiſm, no receiving the Sacrament, no Preaching and publick Prayer amongſt them, only becauſe there is not a Man amongſt them all of a ſpiritual and indelible Character, or in Holy Orders, but muſt they live like the Natives only for want of a mere Nicety? Certainly, if one of better Abilities than the reſt, and deſirous to promote the Knowledge and Practice of Virtue amongſt them, preach and pray, baptize and adminiſter the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper amongſt them, by their Conſent, he is in Reality a Chriſtian Prieſt and a Miniſter of Religion, as much as if he had been honour'd with Impoſition of Hands of a Biſhop, and had received Epiſcopal Benediction. And ſuppoſe the Eſtabliſh'd Clergy of a Nation ſhould corrupt the Chriſtian Doctrine and Worſhip, and refuſe to ordain any but ſuch as themſelves, muſt Chriſtian People be without publick Worſhip and Miniſters of Religion, only becauſe the Eſtabliſh'd Clergy are ill-natur'd, and will neither execute their Office, nor let others that would,

would, and are fit for it, do it? An Inſtance of a Miniſter of Religion without any Clerical or Lay-Ordination we have in *Apollos*, Acts xviii. *who being an eloquent Man, and mighty in the Scriptures, and inſtructed in the Way of the Lord, and fervent in the Spirit, ſpake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, and helped them much who had believed thro' Grace; for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, ſhewing by the Scriptures that Jeſus was the Chriſt; and he ſpake boldly in the Synagogue.* It is apparent enough that he was not a Miniſter or Prieſt formally ordained, unleſs *Aquila* a Tent-maker and *Priſcilla* his Wife did this for him, when they *took him and expounded to him the Way of the Lord more fully*; for there's no Evidence or Probability of his having Prieſtly Ordination to what he did, but ſtrong Probability to the contrary. And the ſame ſacred Story, *Acts* xiii. informs us, that *Saul* and *Barnabas* were ſet apart for their Work by the Ordination of the Church at *Antioch*, that is, by the Chriſtian Laity, and not only the Clergy; for in this Church of *Antioch* were certain Prophets and Teachers, as *Barnabas* and *Saul* and others: *And as they miniſtred to the Lord and faſted, the Holy Ghoſt ſaid, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the Work whereunto I have called them. And when they had faſted and prayed, and laid their Hands upon them, they ſent them away*; that is, the Church did this, for it is not to be ſuppoſed that *Saul* and *Barnabas* did it to themſelves. And it is evident, that *Impoſition of Hands* at firſt was the Act of the Chriſtian Laity *chiefly*, if not *only*: For *Zonaras* in his *Scholia* upon the firſt Apoſtolick Canon ſays, "At preſent indeed a Courſe of Prayers and Invocation of the Holy Spirit, when one is initiated into the Prieſthood and receives Conſecration, is called *Cheirotonia*, becauſe the Biſhop extends his Hand over him whom he bleſſes, when he is choſen into Holy Orders: But antiently the Choice or Suffrage of the People was called *Cheirotonia*, for when it was lawful for the Multitude in the Cities to chuſe their Prieſts or Biſhops, the Multitude met together, and ſome choſe one Man, ſome another; but that it might appear who had the moſt Votes, they ſay the Electors did uſe to ſtretch forth their Hands, and by their Hands ſo ſtretched or put up they were number'd who choſe the one, and who the other; and him who had the moſt Votes, they placed in the High Prieſthood."

" hood." Thus, 2 *Cor.* viii. 19. *Luke* is ſaid to be ordained by the Churches, to be a Companion to St. *Paul* in his Travels. And *Ignatius* in his Epiſtle to the *Philadephians* ſays, " Ye ought as the Church of God to " appoint or ordain a Biſhop for the Church of *Antioch* " in *Syria*." And of this *Cheirotonia*, or Impoſition of Hands, let the Unlearned obſerve, that its Meaning in the beſt and moſt antient Lexicographers is *appointing*, *chuſing*, *voting by holding up of Hands*, which was the Act of the Chriſtian Laity in the Admiſſion of one into the Prieſthood. But in Proceſs of Time the People by the Decree of the Biſhops were excluded from having an Hand in the Election or Ordination of their Biſhop; for it is what we may always obſerve, that ſo much Power as Prieſts gain, the People loſe, and they muſt fall in Proportion as the former exalt themſelves; and every where Prieſtly Dominion is founded in the Slavery of the People, and their Revenues are proportionable to the People's Poverty.

And why any Layman like *Apollos*, for Inſtance, may not do as he did, no good Reaſon, I am apt to believe, can be given: No doubt, he has a Right to make the beſt Uſe and Application of his Knowledge and other uſeful Qualifications to the Good of his Fellow-Chriſtians or his Fellow-Men; tho' I do not ſay he will have a *Legal Title* to the Church's *Patrimony* and the eſtabliſh'd Prieſt's Hire. For what is it that even Prelatical or Papal Ordination itſelf effects? What Influence has the Impoſition of the Hand of a Dioceſan, or a Patriarch, or of his Holineſs himſelf? They take a Layman, lay Hands upon him, and pronounce a certain Form of Words; but what is the Effect of all this? Does *it* really do the Layman *any more Service*, than if a judicious and virtuous Company of Laymen ſhould *do as much* for him? The greateſt Sticklers for this Kind of Ordination have not the Face to ſay that the Man is made *any wiſer* or *better*, or more learned, or in reality more fit for the Paſtoral Office than he *was before*; if he was a Blockhead before, he remains ſo after it; if he had not the Holy Ghoſt before, he continues without it after the Buſineſs is over; if his Ends and Views were ſordid and mercenary, as they *ſometimes* are *in this Caſe*, they are the ſame after all, as *Simon Magus* was ſtill the *ſame Man* even *after* he was baptized by the Hands of an Apoſtle. But if the Patrons of the regular and valid Ordination

we

we are now upon, will not own the *Nullity* of its *real Effects* upon him who is ordained, we will appeal to the Laity, and leave *them* to judge, whether a Layman after he is made a Deacon or a Prieſt be not juſt the *ſame* Man in his *intellectual and moral Qualifications*; and when a Prieſt is advanced higher, whether his *Learning* and *Virtue* improve *as his Titles* and *Revenues* increaſe; whether, for Inſtance, when a Presbyter is transform'd into a Dioceſan, he be the wiſer and better Man, not to ſay he is worſe with his new Titles and Orders and Preferments, as Queen *Elizabeth* and *others* have obſerved. In the Nature of Things, there appears to the Laity *no more ſpiritual Efficacy* in the Impoſition of Hands and in the Prayers of a Clergyman than of a Layman. Then, if there be *any Difference* between the one and the other, it muſt be of *a Civil* or Political Origin, owing to the Conſtitution of the Magiſtrate; for the 23d Article of the Church of *England* teaches us to believe "thoſe are "lawfully called and ſent, who be choſen and called to "this Work by Men who have *publick Authority given* "to them, in the Congregation, to call and ſend Mi-"niſters into the Lord's Vineyard." So that from the Whole it appears, the Laity may ordain as well as others. And if this be not allowed, what muſt become of the Power of the Prieſthood, eſpecially in Proteſtant Countries, where this muſt be moſtly derived from the Laity originally, becauſe it is hard to ſuppoſe of every Prieſt, that he is a rightful Heir and Succeſſor to the Apoſtles, in the Line of Deſcent we have been conſidering?

F. But what is all this to your Purpoſe, ſeeing not the Laity, but your Clergy, as they would be called, ordain one another?

S. It is to my Purpoſe, becauſe, tho' they be Laymen, yet Ordination by them is good; becauſe *the Laity*, as has been proved, may ordain as well *as the Clergy*. And all their Miniſtrations they perform *as the Servants* of the People, their Servants for Jeſus Sake; *as ſuch* they pray and preach, they baptize and adminiſter the Sacrament, and licenſe and ordain others to do this; the People chooſe and appoint or authorize them to do all this, becauſe they make it their peculiar and proper Buſineſs to fit themſelves for it, and therefore may be ſuppoſed to be as fit as others who have other Buſineſs to attend upon in the World. And when they ceaſe to be what People took them for when they choſe them for their religious In-

ſtructors, and inſtead of being *their Miniſters* will be *Lords* over their Faith and their Eſtates too, the People have a Right to turn them away, and chooſe others in their Room to inſtruct them in the Chriſtian Doctrine, to conduct them in the publick Worſhip of almighty God, and perform the other Branches of the Miniſterial Office; and to ordain them to it in a Way agreeable to their own Judgment, if the publick Ordainers will not do it, as has been proved before. In ſhort, if the Miniſter's Doctrine be Chriſtian, his Diſcourſes inſtructive, and his Converſation virtuous, it is no great Matter *who* ordained him, whether *a Dioceſan* or *a mere Presbyter* or a Claſs of Presbyters, whether the Clergy or the Laity, or whether he was ordained in this Way or that, or in no formal Method at all; he is a Miniſter of Chriſt, uſeful to the People, and will ſhine bright in a better World, tho' in this he bore no high ſpiritual Title: And on the contrary, tho' a Man's Holy Orders came immediately from the Pope, if he be a Wolf in Sheep's Cloathing, an *Infidel in fine Linnen*, or vicious in Canonical Veſtments, he is no Miniſter of Chriſt's Church, but of the Synagouge of Satan; and tho' his holy Orders may intitle him to a good Benefice here, they will not be a Title for him to be ſo much as a Door-keeper above in the Church triumphant. Will any therefore lay Streſs upon Punctilio's and Trifles, and ſay *this* Impoſition of Hands does *every thing*, and *that* does *nothing?* Ignorance and Superſtition may do it, but good Senſe and Knowledge of the divine Perfections, of Religion and of the Nature of future Happineſs, will not permit any one to do ſo. With the Impartial and Virtuous it is Nothing who are Ordainers and what is the Form of Ordination, but the great thing is, that the Ordained be a good Man, apt to teach, and willing to do all the Good he can.

And yet every Chriſtian Society that will act prudently in the Uſe of this Right to chooſe and appoint or ordain their Miniſter of Religion, will conſult the learned and virtuous Men amongſt them, and be apt to leave it to them to chooſe and appoint a proper Perſon for them, or deſire them to aſſiſt them in making Choice of ſuch an one, and in inſtalling him in his Place and Office in the Chriſtian Society. To all that has been offered relating to this Right in a Chriſtian Congregation of chooſing and ordaining their ſpiritual Paſtor, let me add one Paſ-

ſage

ſage inſtead of many in the Fathers, and that is in *Tertullian*, Ep. 68. "*The People* have *the chiefeſt Power* "of chooſing worthy Prieſts, and refuſing the unwor- "thy." And ſpeaking of the Ordination of a Biſhop, he ſays, "All the neighbouring Biſhops of the ſame "Province do come together to that People over whom "the Biſhop is ſet, and the Biſhop is appointed, the "People being preſent, who beſt know the Life of every "one, and have ſeen their Converſation. Which alſo "we ſaw done with you in the Ordination of *Sabinus* "our Collegue; the Office of a Biſhop was given him, "and Hands impoſed upon him in the Place of *Baſilides*, "by the Suffrage of the whole Fraternity, and the "Judgment of the Biſhops that had met together."

F. There is yet the Converſation of theſe Men whoſe Cauſe you are ſo warm an Advocate for, to be conſidered; I mean *their Sneaking* to their People, their fawning upon them and flattering them, in order to induce them to *large Contributions* to their Support and Maintenance.

S. I am ſorry to find People entertain unworthy Thoughts of Men that they have litttle or no Acquaintance with, for I am ſatisfied this is really the Caſe here. Do they who ſpeak thus of them, know what they ſay to be true, or do they expoſe them only from Imagination? How ſhould their Adverſaries know this to be true, ſince they are ſcarce ever in Company with them, and many of them ſtudiouſly avoid and ſhun them? Therefore this muſt paſs for only an uncharitable and an ill-natur'd Conjecture, for Scandal and Defamation, according to that old and wicked Maxim, *Fortiter calumniare, & aliquid adhærebit.* True, *ſeveral* of them do live upon the Contributions of their People, their own Fortunes being expended upon their Education; and if *others*, that I could name, were obliged to ſubſiſt themſelves in the ſame Manner, perhaps in Reality it would be no worſe, tho' not ſo agreeable to them, and better not only for themſelves but for their People. And it is certain the primitive Chriſtian Clergy were maintain'd this Way, even Jeſus and his Apoſtles, and not by Parſonages or Vicarages, by Tythes and large Benefices, not by Royal Munificence and Bounty, which too often are only the Supports of the Sloth and Pride, the Avarice and ſecular Grandeur, the Haughtineſs and Luxury of thoſe who pretend they are Chriſt's Ambaſſadors and the Apoſtles Succeſſors. "The Primitive Church," ſays

Biſhop *Hooper*, " had no ſuch Biſhops as be now-a-days. " If *the fourth Part* of the Biſhoprick remained to the " Biſhop, it were *ſufficient*; the *third Part* to ſuch as " teach good Learning; the *ſecond Part* to the Poor of " the Dioceſe; and *the other* to maintain the Men of " War for the Safeguard of the Commonwealth; it " were *better* beſtowed a great deal. For now it is *ill* " uſed and beſtowed, for the greateſt Part, upon thoſe " who have *no Need* of it; or elſe upon ſuch ill Men as " ſhould be maintained with *no Man's Goods*. It were " well done to provide for ſuch, as by ill bringing up " cannot now otherwiſe live; and provide ſuch Means, " that hereafter no more offend in that Kind of Life. " If any Man be offended with me for thus ſaying, he " loveth not his own Health, nor God's Laws, nor " Man's, out of which I am always ready to prove the " thing I have ſaid to be true." Upon the *Command.* p. 74. *Diſintereſted Men*, no doubt, will approve of *this* or *ſome ſuch Method* as this of the good old Biſhop, and wiſh it were put in Execution, becauſe it would conduce to the Intereſt of both Clergy and Laity; to the Intereſt of the Clergy, not their ſecular Wealth and Grandeur, but to the Intereſt of Wiſdom and Virtue in them; and to the Intereſt of the Laity, as by this means the ſuperfluous Wealth of the Clergy would be turned into a proper Channel and Circulation, that would promote their Eaſe and Welfare. But no Wonder if many of the old Biſhop's *Brethren now-a-days* be not of his Mind, but publiſh their *Codices*, cry up the *divine Right of Tythes*, inculcate upon one another *a diligent Care* of the Church's Rights, and add Benefice to Benefice; for the Love of Wealth increaſes in Proportion to its Increaſe. And a little ſtrange is it, that the Diſſenting Miniſters cannot live upon the Contributions of their People, without the Envy and ill Word of their Neighbours, ſince they are content the Civil Magiſtrate determines what Clergy ſhall enjoy the Tythes and Temples; though they cannot believe the divine Right of Tythes, nor hear themſelves run down as crouching and ſneaking for a Morſel of Bread or a Barley-Loaf, without ſtanding up in their own Defence; for as mean and poor-ſpirited as they are, they have too much Spirit in them to hear this and be ſilent, becauſe they know it is a downright Falſhood. They indeed do or ſhould ſtrive to be courteous and obliging to all Mankind, and eſpe-

cially

cially to their particular Friends, from a generous Principle of Gratitude: And if *ſome others* would do ſo, it would be to their Credit and Honour, and a Means of making them a more uſeful and acceptable Order of Men, and rolling off that Contempt they complain of; and probably, would not the Civil Magiſtrate feed and nouriſh and enrich them ſo much as he does by one Method and another, they would endeavour to be better Neighbours and better Clergymen. As for the Diſſenting Miniſters, they are courteous and affable, as we have ſaid, and obliging to their particular Friends, but not ſo complaiſant as to ſit up Night after Night in an Alehouſe with them, or to uſe any ſuch Method of Endearment, tho' they are not ignorant how much Reſpect *ſome* gain by no more commendable Methods. Yet, let none imagine I am for juſtifying the Conduct of *every one* of them; there may be *ſome* guilty of little mean Arts to recommend themſelves to their Friends; they may make uſe of *Grimace* and *Whining*, and put on *grave* and *ſolemn Airs* to pleaſe the Well-meaning but Injudicious; for, ſince there was a *Judas* amongſt the twelve Apoſtles, no Marvel if there ſhould be ſome weak and imprudent Men amongſt the Body of the Diſſenting Teachers; and imprudent would it be to undertake to defend the Conduct of them all: But let the World judge, in God's Name, who are the moſt guilty of unjuſtifiable Methods for gaining *a Living* or *a Livelihood*, they or their Accuſers.

PART III. *Concerning the* Divine Worſhip *of the Diſſenters.*

F. It is now time we proceed to the *divine Service* or religious Worſhip amongſt the Diſſenters, which I ſuppoſe you will not be able to ſay ſo much for as you have for their Separation and their Teachers. For againſt this I have ſeveral material Objections, which probably you have not calmly and impartially conſidered; they are ſuch as theſe: You lay aſide and deſpiſe our excellent Liturgy, and pray *Ex-tempore*; a Method of Worſhip contrary not only to our Church, but to the Uſage of the primitive Church; a Method too which puts thoſe who uſe it under a Neceſſity of uſing indecent Expreſſions and Tautologies, and of being incoherent and rambling, much like that of thoſe Enthuſiaſts who pretend to pray and preach by the Spirit; and a Method

too

too which gives him that prays an Opportunity of pouring out his own private Whims and Fancies, be they ever ſo ridiculous and blaſphemous.

S. Indeed it muſt be confeſs'd, we do not uſe your excellent Liturgy as you call it, becauſe we ſee no Reaſon to think of it as many do; as Biſhop *Beveridge*, for Inſtance, who extols "the extraordinary Prudence, as "well as Piety, of our firſt Reformers, who compiled "the Book of Common Prayer ſo exactly conformable "unto the Word of God, and that Apoſtolick Canon, "*Let all Things be done decently and in Order.* This, "*ſays the Biſhop*, I cannot but aſcribe to the ſame extraordinary Aid and Aſſiſtance from God, whereby "they were enabled afterwards to ſuffer Martyrdom "for his ſake, and ſo to confirm what they had done "with their Blood." And *Abbot* tells us, "That the "Wit of Men and Angels could not mend it, and that "it is a ſufficient Diſcharge of a Miniſter's Duty to "read it." This is ſo extraordinary a Commendation of it, that we cannot believe it deſerves it altogether. But my Buſineſs is firſt to anſwer the Objections you bring againſt the Worſhip amongſt the Diſſenters, and then I ſhall tell you what I think of yours. Their Way of worſhipping Almighty God in publick, you ſay, is not only contrary to yours, but to the Uſage of the primitive Church. If you mean the primitive Church *in the Ages of Popery*, I grant what you ſay is true; but if you mean the *moſt primitive Church*, in the Apoſtolick Age and the firſt two or three Centuries, I muſt contradict you; for *no where* in all the Writings of this Length of Time is there any Mention made of *preſcribed Forms* of Prayer, nor any thing like it, but many Paſſages to the contrary. *Hermus* a moſt antient Writer ſays, "That the Miniſter ſpeaks in Prayer in the Congrega"tion *as* God would have him:" *Juſtin Martyr*, "That the Preſident offers Prayers and Thankſgivings "*according as he is able:*" *Origen*, "We worſhip "one God and his only Son, who is his Word and "Image, with Supplications and Honours, *according to* "*our Ability*, offering *to the God* of the Univerſe Prayers "and Praiſes, *thro' his only begotten Son*; the *Grecian* "Chriſtians in *Greek*, the *Romans* in *Latin*, and every "one in his own proper Language prays to God and "praiſes him *as he is able.*" *Tertullian*, "We Chri"ſtians pray for all Emperors, *&c.* looking up to Hea-

"ven

" ven with expanded Hands, becauſe guilty; with our " Heads uncover'd, becauſe we are not aſhamed; laſt- " ly, *without a Monitor*, becauſe our Prayers flow *from* " *the Heart.*" *Ambroſe* even in the fourth Century ſpeaks thus, " While I was offering, that is, giving the " holy Communion, I underſtood one *Caſtulus*, whom " the *Arians* called a *Presbyter*, was ſeized by the Peo- " ple, who had met with him as they were going in the " Street. I began to weep moſt bitterly, and in the " very Oblation, to beſeech God that he would help, " and that this Man's Blood might not be ſhed in the " Church's Cauſe; and truly, that my Blood might be " ſhed not only for the Safety of the People, but for " the Wicked themſelves." But it would be tedious to quote one half of the Paſſages in the moſt antient Fathers to this Purpoſe; inſtead therefore of doing this, I ſhall ſubjoin a Paſſage of the late excellent *Lord Chancellor*, in his *Enquiry into the Conſtitution*, &c. *of the Primitive Church:* " There is not," ſays that great Man, " *the leaſt Mention* of any preſcribed Forms in " any of the primitive Writings, nor the leaſt Word " or Syllable tending thereto, but rather ſome Expreſ- " ſions intimating the contrary." If any therefore will boaſt of Antiquity and the Uſage of the primitive Chriſtian Church being in Favour of a preſcribed Liturgy, after all the Evidence which has been brought to the contrary, out of the moſt antient and genuine Writings of the Fathers, by many learned Men Time after Time, it muſt be owing to their *Want of Acquaintance* with thoſe Writings, or to *great Prejudice*, or to *ſomething worſe* than either. For it is as plain as any ſuch antient Fact can be, that in the firſt three Centuries there were no preſcribed Liturgies or Forms of Prayer impoſed upon the Chriſtian Churches, that every Chriſtian Miniſter uſed ſuch Expreſſions in Prayer as he thought proper, and varied his Petitions according to preſent Circumſtances and Emergencies. So that 'tis evident, that the free Way of Worſhip is not contrary but agreeable to the Uſage of the beſt and trueſt Antiquity. For if we go up higher to the Apoſtolick Age, we ſhall find no Proof of its being contrary to the religious Uſage of that Time, for in all the Goſpels, the Acts, and the Epiſtles there is not one Syllable of a Form of Prayer, excepting that of the Lord's Prayer, not one Inſtance of a Liturgy, nor any Direction to Chriſtian Miniſters to compoſe one. And

as

as to the Lord's Prayer, it is utterly falſe which ſome Dealers in Scandal have ſaid of the Diſſenters with Reference to it, that they think meanly of it, and never uſe it out of their obſtinate Averſion to all Forms; for they think as highly of it as their Adverſaries, and believe that it cannot be mended by the Wit of Men or Angels; and their Miniſters uſe it almoſt conſtantly in their publick Devotions, and frequently in their private Prayers, and their Children are taught to repeat this Prayer Morning and Evening. Yet they or their Adverſaries do not believe no other Prayer is to be made uſe of, or that our Lord did intend to oblige his Followers to uſe juſt the ſame Words and no other than thoſe of the Lord's Prayer. Nay, they obſerve we are no where told that the Apoſtles themſelves did conſtantly uſe this Prayer in publick worſhipping Aſſemblies; nay, that there is not the leaſt Hint of their ever making uſe of it in publick Worſhip: And in the Prayer which *Polycarp* made at the Stake, this Prayer was not uſed either at the Beginning, the Middle, or the End. Their Notion therefore of this truly moſt excellent Form of Prayer, their Adverſaries may take in the Words of *Tertullian*, which are theſe: "There are ſeveral things to be asked, "according to every one's Circumſtances: The right- "ful and ordinary Prayer the Lord's Prayer being firſt "uſed as a Foundation, we may lawfully add other De- "ſires, and build other Petitions upon it: Only we "muſt remember his Precepts, leſt we fall as much "ſhort of being heard by him, as we do of obeying "his Precepts." *De Orat.* C. 9.

F. But granting all this you ſay to be true, yet this Method of Prayer you are now ſo fond of ſhould not be permitted, becauſe it frequently lays him who prays under an unhappy Neceſſity of uſing nauſeous Repetitions and flat and indecent Expreſſions, of making improper Pauſes, and indecent Hemming and Coughing till the barren Invention ſuggeſt ſomething new.

S. I know much has been ſaid in a ſcornful Way of the Diſſenting Miniſters hemming and coughing in their publick Devotions, and uſing Tautologies and indecent Expreſſions; and *how* this Duty was performed amongſt ſome of them *formerly*, I do not know: But at preſent it is not performed in this diſagreeable Manner, but with becoming Solemnity and Devotion, and Propriety of Expreſſion, and as much without the Indecencies you mention,

mention, as if they were reading a Form. Some of their moſt learned and zealous Adverſaries own "their "Sermons are correct, ſtudied and compoſed, purged of "old and obſolete Words, and Care is taken that they "be not abrupt and incoherent." Dr. *Nichols*'s *Defence*, &c. *p.* 334. And if this be true of their *Sermons*, and it may eaſily be ſuppoſed to be ſo, conſidering who ſays it; the like is true of their *Devotions*, becauſe they ſtudy and endeavour in their Prayers alſo to be coherent and methodical, and perform a Duty ſo ſolemn in the beſt Manner they can: But the ſureſt Way of being convinced of the Truth hereof, would be *not to hearken* to every idle and malicious Tale concerning their Devotions, but *to go* and *obſerve* whether they or others are more in the right in the Account of their publick Prayers.

And now having conſider'd and anſwer'd the moſt material Objections againſt *free Prayer* amongſt the Diſſenters, give me Leave to ſhew you my Reaſons why I prefer it *to Forms*. My Reaſons are chiefly theſe *three*: *The firſt* is, that it gives him that prays an Opportunity of *adapting* publick Prayer to the State of the Worſhippers. There is a great Difference in the State of publick worſhipping Aſſemblies, and a great Difference in the State of one and the ſame Aſſembly at different Times; and doubtleſs, publick as well as private Devotion ſhould be *ſuited* as much as may be to the Condition of thoſe that pray; and this Method of Prayer permits this to be done. *Another Reaſon* why this Method of publick Devotion ſhould be preferred to the other, is, that it tends *to raiſe* and *keep up Attention*, to *enliven* Devotion, and promote a devout and ſacred Fervour of Affection in the Worſhip of Almighty God. For ſuch is the Frame of Human Nature, that *Variety* of Matter and Expreſſion is *grateful*, and *a frequent Repetition* of the ſame thing does not command Attention, and make that Impreſſion that the *firſt* Reading or Hearing of it did. Whether this be a Fault or no, let others determine that pleaſe, yet it is what we cannot be freed from perhaps as long as we are in the preſent State of Exiſtence. Therefore, ſince the Mind and Heart are to be engaged in this religious Duty, it is neceſſary that we uſe that Method that is *moſt proper* and effectual for this End, and that is *free Prayer*. My *third Reaſon* for preferring this Method of Devotion to the other is, that it has *a natural Tendency* to promote *the Gift* of Prayer, and I may add,

Piety too; for he that muſt pray without Form in Publick, will, that he may qualify himſelf for it amongſt other Ends, be frequently engaged in private Devotion; and he that prays frequently in private or in ſecret, is in a more likely Way of improving in all Virtue than he who contents himſelf with only publick Prayers.

On the contrary, *no Form* of Prayer can eaſily be drawn up even by *the publick and authorized Makers of Forms*, that will *ſuit* all Emergencies. And when the Circumſtances not only of a Congregation, but of a whole Nation are conſiderably altered, very *great Inconveniences*, not to ſay *worſe*, may attend the Uſe of a ſtated and impoſed Form of Prayers. An Inſtance of this Nature we had juſt before the *Happy Revolution* in 1688: About that Time not only the Diſſenters, but the Eſtabliſhed Church were diſpleaſed with the Religion and Government of King *James*, and thought we were in great Danger both of Popery and Tyranny coming in upon us; wherefore *both Sides prayed earneſtly* in private for Succeſs to the *Prince of* ORANGE: But they of the Eſtabliſhment were *obliged* by the impoſed and ſtated Form, to pray in publick "that God would ſtrengthen "*King James*, that he might vanquiſh and overcome *all* "*his Enemies*; and that it might pleaſe God to keep "and ſtrengthen in his true Worſhip, in Righteouſneſs "and Holineſs of Life, his Servant *James*, our moſt "gracious King and Governor: That it might pleaſe "him to be his Defender and Keeper, giving him the "*Victory over all his Enemies.*" Again; as *Variety of Matter* and Expreſſion is of *great Service* in Prayer, ſo *a conſtant Form* is apt to *damp Devotion*; for People indeed may ſay what they pleaſe, but human Nature loves and is pleaſed with a grateful Variety, and grows indifferent to that which is repeated a thouſand times and more; and it will be human Nature in this Reſpect, as long as we are here below: Which was the thing probably which made my Lord *Hallifax* break out into theſe Expreſſions upon the Subject we are now upon: "When a Man "qualified, endued with Learning too, and adorned "with a good Life, breaks out into a warm and well-"delivered Prayer before a Sermon, it has the Appea-"rance of a divine Rapture, he *raiſes* and *leads the* "*Hearts* of the Aſſembly in another Manner than the "moſt compoſed and beſt ſtudied Forms can do. And "the *Pray-We's* would look like ſo many Statues or

"*Men*

" *Men of Straw* in the Pulpit, compared with thoſe " who ſpeak with ſo powerful Zeal, that Men are " tempted to believe that Heaven itſelf has directed " their Words unto them."——Further, as praying in this free and unconfined Manner requires *previous Meditation* to ſuit it to the State of the People; ſo ſtinted and impoſed Forms rather tend to the *Neglect of this* and *other proper Methods* previouſly neceſſary to publick Worſhip.

F. There is yet one Objection which had almoſt ſlipt me, and it is this: A worſhipping Aſſembly amongſt you cannot know beforehand what they are to join with the Miniſter in praying for: Whereas, it is highly expedient they ſhould know this beforehand, otherwiſe he may lead them unawares into Petitions contrary both to their own Hearts and to religious Doctrines.

S. This is an Objection that ſome think has a mighty Force in it to ſupport Liturgies, and quite overthrow the Uſe of free Prayer, and no uncommon Thing is it for ſeveral to lay a great Streſs upon weak Grounds. It is very true, a Diſſenting Congregation *know not*, when one Sentence is ended in their publick Prayers, *what is to follow next:* But *this* is rather an Advantage than a Diſadvantage to the Worſhippers, as by this Means they are kept more attentive to what they are about. Beſides, the Subject Matter of Prayer is plain, and requires not much Time for deliberating about it. As ſoon as a Petition is all delivered in the free Way, the People may ſay *Amen* to it; and they cannot ſay ſo to a Petition in the other Way till it be read out, or run over in the Mind. But it is not worth our while to inſiſt longer upon an Objection ſo trifling, that more Words would be thrown away upon it.

F. But what, are you Diſſenters againſt all Forms of Prayer?

S. No, they are not; their Miniſters have ſeveral of them formerly and of late publiſh'd Forms of Prayer; and they exhort their People in publick to uſe Forms where there is need of them, and do not confine them to Forms of their own compoſing, but perſuade them to uſe any good Forms whatever till they can pray pertinently and profitably without them; and then they urge them to lay their Forms aſide, as lame Men do their Crutches when they need them not, to uſe Biſhop *Wilkins*'s Simile. And with regard to the Forms uſed

in the Church of *England*, they eſteem the Matter of them for the moſt Part to be good, and think they are not to be deſpiſed, eſpecially conſidering the Time when, and the Circumſtances in which the Compilers of them were at their being put together. But they are ſatisfied that thoſe worthy Perſons never dreamt or wiſh'd they ſhould prove *unalterable Forms*, and After-Ages would be obliged to uſe them and no other; and believe if they were now alive, they would, as well as we, think them *very capable* of Improvement. For the Diſſenters have ſhewn, that they are not ſo perfect, as not to be mended by the *Wit of Men*, to ſay nothing of *the Wit of Angels*; and that there's Room enough for altering them for the better: And this is what the moſt learned and impartial Clergy in the Eſtabliſhment have acknowledg'd. Biſhop *Stillingfleet* mentioning ſeveral Things in the Book of Common Prayer which the Diſſenters objected againſt, freely owns, "if they were reviewed, explained or amended, it may be ſo far from being *a Diſhonour* to our Church, that it may *add to the Glory* of it." *Pref. to the Unreaſ. of Separat.* p. 92. And his Grace the preſent Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, ſpeaking of a Scheme begun in King *James*'s Reign, and deſigned to be carried on in King *William*'s, to gain the Diſſenters to the Church, and in order thereto, to review and enlarge the Liturgy, by correcting ſome Things and adding others, calls it "a good Deſign, which was approved of by a Set of Men, than which the Church was never at one Time bleſſed with either wiſer or better ſince it was a Church. And I am perſuaded, adds his Grace, that it had been for the Peace and Intereſt of our Church and State, had it been accompliſhed." *Sacheverel*'s Tryal. Therefore if the Diſſenters find Fault with the eſtabliſhed Liturgy, they ſhould not therefore be reviled and call'd foul Names, ſince this is nothing but what the greateſt Men in the Church have done, and not without very good Reaſon, as may afterwards appear. For why may not the Diſſenters, as well as others, have Leave to make this Complaint? Therefore they ſhould be born with, if they ſay the Confeſſions, Petitions, and Thankſgivings of the Book of Common Prayer might be made more particular, ſome Expreſſions left out, and others more proper put in their Room; and the Multitude of ſhort Collects might be brought into one or two Prayers

to be read by the Miniſter only, and the People to ſay *Amen* at the Concluſion only, as the Manner formerly was, 1 *Chron.* xvi. 36. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 16. But perhaps ſome may be of Opinion, conſidering how difficult a Task it is *to alter ſome Things* for the better, that the beſt way would be either to lay it wholly aſide, and compoſe a Liturgy wholly new, or elſe by Degrees to introduce into the Church the Uſe of free Prayer, which might be more to the Credit of the Clergy themſelves. To indulge them the Privilege of praying by a Book, nay, to confine them to it only, and for them to inſiſt upon this as a mighty Privilege, looks too much like a Confeſſion that they cannot worſhip God without this Help; which certainly is very little to the Honour of a Miniſter of Religion, who pretends to give himſelf to Reading and Prayer, as the Apoſtles did, whoſe Succeſſors they pretend to be. Some indeed, ſome *weak and little* Minds may imagine it is a *conſiderable Attainment* to read Forms of Prayer diſtinctly and with a *Clerical Air*, and may fancy, as ſome before them have, that it is a *ſufficient Diſcharge* of a Miniſter's Duty *but to read* the Common Prayer: But others cannot think ſo, when they conſider this is no more than what a School-Boy or a Mechanick may perform, if his Eyes be good, his Voice clear and audible, and he can read his Mother's Tongue as well as ſpeak it. But to offer up a Prayer to Almighty God in the free Way, before a publick worſhipping Aſſembly, worthy a grave Man and a Divine, and agreeable to the Dignity of ſuch an Aſſembly, is a Qualification not to be met with *in the Generality* of the Unlearned, nay, not of *the Learned* themſelves who are not accuſtomed to it. Would but the Clergy therefore conſult their own Credit and Honour, and not only their Eaſe, they would no more be eager for a continued Impoſition of a preſcribed Liturgy upon them, than they would be deſirous that the Government would deprive them of the Liberty of making their own Sermons, as it was taken from their Predeceſſors; and ſhould oblige them alſo to read old Homilies. Indeed the Love of Eaſe and Indulgence would cry aloud for both Forms of Prayer and of Preaching too; *Sloth* and *Inſufficiency* for the Paſtoral Office would plead earneſtly for being excuſed *from compoſing* either Prayers or Sermons: But one would think a Man well furniſhed for this Function, who has imbibed ſacred

cred Truth with great Satisfaction, and has laid up a Body of Divinity in his Head as well as one in his Study, and is under a deep and uniform Senſe of the Principles of Religion, would not deſire any Set of fallible Men to make his Prayers for him any more than his Sermons; for a deep Senſe of any Subject naturally fills the Mind with it, and makes a Perſon ſpeak pertinently and largely upon it; *Pectus eſt quod Diſertos facit, & Vis Mentis: Ideoque imperitis quoque, ſi modò ſint aliquo Affectu concitati, Verba non deſunt.* Quint. Inſt. Orat. lib. 10. c. 7. To cry out therefore againſt praying without Book, looks not well by any means in a Clergyman, and tends to his Diſhonour more Ways than one, as it is apt to give diſcerning People a mean Opinion not only of his intellectual Abilities, but of his moral Qualifications; which latter, doubtleſs, are of much greater Conſideration and Importance, eſpecially in a Miniſter of Religion. And if they would but take the Advice of one that wiſhes them very well, it ſhould be, that they would never rail in publick or private againſt *free Prayer*, and on the other hand extravagantly extol *old Forms*, the reading of which requires *no more* in a Miniſter than a little Skill in the Kalendar, and pronouncing what he has before him in a fair large Character, with a Prieſtly Voice and Tone. This is ſurely too low and mean an Attainment for a Man of an ingenuous and liberal Education and Holy Orders to be proud of, and what People of Senſe and Judgment will not be apt to value him for.

Add to this, that the Clergy ſhould be very unwilling to have the World believe, there is *ſtill* the ſame Reaſon for the Continuance of Liturgies, that there *was* for the firſt compiling and impoſing of them. For Liturgies, it does not appear, were uſed at all in the Apoſtolick and immediately ſucceeding Ages; and they were not introduced into the Church till the Heathen Perſecutions ceaſed, which kept alive the Zeal of Chriſtians, and *till Honours and Riches* flowed into the Church, by which the Prieſthood were ſadly corrupted and transformed into another Set of Men than they were wont to be. Then Liturgies were gradually introduced for the Benefit of an unlearned and worthleſs Clergy, who thro' Sloth, Ignorance, and other ſuch Cauſes were unfit for performing any Branch of the Paſtoral Office. And no Wonder, that our firſt Reformers retained the publick

lick Forms of the Papiſts; for the Clergy, who in Ages paſt had been ignorant to a Proverb, were in the Beginning of the Reformation generally ſo ignorant and unqualified for their proper Work, that it was not to be expected that they ſhould pray without Forms, in publick; ſo far from that, that moſt of them were deem'd unfit for making their own Sermons, and therefore *Homilies* were compoſed for their Uſe and Benefit as well as *Liturgies*. But as Learning revived, and the Clergy grew wiſer and fitter for the Duties of their Function, *Homilies* were gradually laid aſide; and the ſame might have been expected with Reference to Liturgies, which like Homilies were compoſed for the Relief of an ignorant and unqualified Clergy. But now that our Clergy are another Set of Men than the Clergy at the Beginning of the Reformation, it may reaſonably be expected from them, that at leaſt they will not contend for the continued Impoſition of preſcribed Forms of Devotion, and appear againſt the Uſe of free Prayer in publick worſhipping Aſſemblies, ſince ſuch Forms are for Babes, and not for thoſe who have their Senſes exercis'd by reaſon of Uſe to diſcern between Good and Evil; for *the ignorant and ſtupid*, and not for the *judicious* and well qualified Divines. Therefore from a ſincere Regard and Concern for their own Credit and Reputation, one would beſeech them to leave the Elements of the Reformation, and to go on towards Perfection. And why ſhould theſe Gentlemen be averſe to a proper Change of the Method of Divine Worſhip, ſince they pretend, at leaſt ſome of them, "that *extempore* Prayer would be more *eaſy* and "*leſs burthenſome* to them than the Service they uſe, "and that it is no hard Matter for even the meaneſt of "them to paſs an *extempore* Prayer upon a Congrega-"tion." Bp. *King*'s *Diſc. of the Inventions*, &c. *p.* 186. If the Method the Diſſenters uſe in the Worſhip of Almighty God be *ſo eaſy*, it is ſomewhat ſtrange that there is ſo general Averſion to it, and ſo great an Outcry is made againſt it, it being notorious that the Adverſaries of it in general do not love to be at *very much Pains* in the Diſcharge of the Duties of their Office.

F. Yet this *extempore* Way of praying is not proper to be allowed and made uſe of by all amongſt you, without prudent Limitation and Reſtriction; for as wiſe and learned and good as you pretend your Teachers are, they are not all ſo, you muſt own: But ſuppoſe they were all

ſo,

ſo, yet this Method of Prayer is allowed to your Laity as well as to your Clergy, without any neceſſary Exception; and ſorry Work, it may be ſuppoſed, many of the former, as alſo ſome of the latter, make of ſo ſacred and ſolemn a Duty. What flat, rambling, incoherent and indecent Addreſſes have I heard of, that ſome of the Party have made to God! Prayers almoſt unworthy to have the Attention of a wiſe and judicious Man, and infinitely unworthy to be made to the All-perfect Being.

S. As to Laymen, you know they do not pray in the publick Congregation; therefore what they do has no Relation to the Subject of our preſent Debate, which is Publick Prayer. And with regard to the more ignorant and leſs qualified of their Preachers, they who pretend *extempore* Prayer is ſo very eaſy a Performance, even more ſo than reading a Form in a fair and large Character, cannot in Reaſon be for reſtraining even them from making uſe of this Method, becauſe, as they wou'd make the World believe, there is not the leaſt Difficulty in it. But to return a full Anſwer to what is here objected, I ſhall add a Paſſage from St. *Auſtin*, *de Catech. rudib.* c. 9. tom. 4. "When, ſays this Father, they become "Chriſtians who excel others in the Art of Speaking, "we muſt inculcate upon them in particular this one "thing, that they be cloathed with Chriſtian Humility, "that they may learn not to deſpiſe thoſe whom they "may obſerve to be more careful to avoid a Fault in "their Actions than in their Expreſſions, and that they "may not dare to compare an eloquent Tongue with a "pure Heart, tho' they have been uſed to give that the "Preference. They muſt be made to underſtand that "not *the Voice* but *the Affections* of the Soul reach the "divine Ear; for then they will not laugh, if they ob-"ſerve any of the Biſhops and Miniſters of the Church "are guilty of *Barbariſms* and *Soleciſms* in their Prayer "to God, or *blunder* in the Words they pronounce." Which excellent Paſſage of St. *Auſtin*'s ſerves for *a two-fold Uſe*, both to inform us that in his Time there were *no Liturgies* impoſed in the Chriſtian Church, at leaſt not in his Country; and that he and his Fellow-Biſhops did not apprehend the Barbariſms and Soleciſms to which their Method of Prayer, which is ours too, was liable, were a ſufficient Argument for laying it wholly aſide, and tying up the Miniſters of the Church to ſet Forms in publick Worſhip. It were indeed to be earneſtly wiſh'd, that

that *both* the Diſſenting *Laity* as well as their *Teachers* would endeavour to attain ſuch a Degree of the Gift of Prayer, as it is called, as would free them from theſe Imperfections the good old Father mentions; for ſuch a Degree is certainly to be attain'd, and it would be of great Uſe both to Heads of Families themſelves, and to all about them; it would be a Credit to the Diſſenting Intereſt; and, which is much more valuable, a Means of promoting true Virtue and pure Religion. But they are much miſtaken who think the Diſſenters are at no Pains to qualify themſelves for the Performance of Social Prayer eſpecially, in a methodical and becoming Way; for not only their Miniſters, but ſeveral of the Laity, make it their Endeavour for ſome time to attain an Ability of praying in a proper Method, and with Propriety of Expreſſion; and they who cannot do this, are adviſed to pray by a Form till they can do it. But this Method of Prayer, which has already been ſhewn to be in itſelf preferable to the other, ſhould not therefore be laid aſide, only becauſe they who make uſe of it, do now and then drop a leſs proper Expreſſion, or be guilty of a Barbariſm, or Soleciſm, or falſe Grammar, or a Tautology. The Method to be taken in this Caſe, is to leave every one to their own Liberty of acting according to their own Conſciences, to recommend the Uſe of pious and devout Forms to the Ignorant, and to encourage and cultivate the Gift of Prayer, as Biſhop *Wilkins* calls it, in proper Subordination to inward Devotion of Soul. For there is *not one Paſſage* in both Teſtaments to countenance impoſing a Liturgy, but many to the contrary; for moſt of the Prayers both publick and private that we meet with in the Bible, are conceived or free Prayers. Of *Publick Prayer* without a Form there are ſeveral Inſtances not to be queſtion'd, as that of *Solomon* at the Dedication of the Temple, 1 *Kings* viii. 22. of *Aſa* when the *Ethiopians* came againſt him, 2 *Chron.* xiv. 11. of *Jehoſaphat* upon the like Occaſion, 2 *Chron.* xx. 5. of *Hezekiah* againſt the blaſphemous Threats of *Rabſhakeh*, *Iſai.* xxxvii. 15, *&c.* of *Ezra*, ch. ix. 5, *&c.* And of *Private Prayer* without a Form the Inſtances are many too; as that of *Abraham*'s Servant, *Gen.* xxiv. 12, 13. of *Abraham* for *Abimelech*, ch. xx. 17. of *Jacob*, ch. xxxii. 9. But the Inſtances of this Kind are too many to be particularly and fully mentioned. And if we go through the New Teſtament, we ſhall meet with ſeve-

ral Inſtances of free Prayer, but not with ſo much as one Precept or Example of a Form, excepting, as was ſaid before, that of our Saviour's. Therefore ſeeing this Method of Prayer is the moſt agreeable to the Practice of devout Men under every Diſpenſation of Religion, and to the Rules and Directions in Holy Scriptures relating to Prayer, and to the Practice of the primitive Church in particular, which generally uſed to pray with Eyes, and ſometimes with Eyes and Hands lifted up to Heaven; and ſince this Method in its own Nature is more fit for engaging the Attention of the Mind, and exciting devout Affections than the other, and more for the Credit and real Benefit of the Clergy and Laity too; ſince all this has been proved of free Prayer, it may be hoped, that they who conſider all this impartially will think favourably of it, and encourage and promote it, and that nothing but *Ignorance* and *Prejudice*, *Bigotry* and *Superſtition* will any longer pour Contempt upon it. But if it ſhould not be thought proper to encourage and promote this Method of Prayer in publick and in private, and to cultivate the Gift of Prayer in order thereunto, it may very reaſonably be expected from the Clergy eſpecially, that they will not be againſt promoting the *Gift of Memory*, in order to the repeating Forms without Book, ſince this is ſo ſmall a Matter, and tends rather to procure Attention and excite proper Affections than a bare reading them in a Book.

PART IV. *Concerning* the Faith *of the Diſſenters.*

F. It is now Time to proceed to the Faith of the Diſſenters; for tho' they pretend to believe the ſame Creed and Articles that we do, excepting two or three, and to have one and the ſame Faith that we have, as they have one and the ſame Lord and God and Hope that we have; it may be very much queſtioned. However, it is too evident to us, that they are of *Republican Principles*, and when Opportunity ſerves, they can reduce them to *Practice*. We have not forgot the bloody and flagitious Part which they bore in the Rebellion in King *Charles* the Firſt's Reign, and how they fill'd up the Meaſure of their Iniquity by cutting off the Head of that pious Prince of bleſſed Memory. And the Principles of the Party at this Day are ſtill the ſame, tho' thro' a kind Providence they have not the ſame Opportunity of putting them in Practice by open Seditions and Rebellions.

Whereas,

Whereas, the Church of *England* may boaſt of her Loyalty to *Britiſh* Monarchs.

S. We know it is the Cuſtom, eſpecially upon every 30th of *January*, for many Clergymen to lay all the Blame of the Civil War, and of the ſad Fate of that unhappy Prince, upon the Diſſenters, as if they had Licence once a Year to calumniate their Neighbours, and dreſs them in the Skins of wild Beaſts, to be worried by their People: A Practice that has been very miſchievous to the Nation, as it tends to ſet Neighbours and Countrymen together by the Ears, and in its own Nature to produce an inteſtine War amongſt them; and a Practice therefore, that ſhould have a Check put to it by the Civil Magiſtrate, becauſe by this means much Animoſity might be prevented, and an End put to an annual groſs Miſrepreſentation of Matters of Fact. For it is certain from Hiſtorians on both Sides, that the Diſſenters were no more the Authors of that Civil War than others, and that they were not the wicked Murtherers of that unfortunate Prince any more than other Parties: Both theſe Points are as clear and undeniable in the Hiſtory of thoſe Times, as any Matters of Fact relating to them. The Authors of the War the Noble Hiſtorian himſelf calls "wiſe Men, to whoſe Underſtanding the Foundations of Right and Security ſeemed in "ſo much Danger of Deſtruction." And he affirms that the Majority in both Houſes of the long Parliament, and the leading Men in them, were known to be as great Enemies to Presbytery as to the King. And with regard to the barbarous Murther of the King, it is well known the Presbyterians in all the three Kingdoms declared and proteſted againſt it, and were as innocent of it as any one ſingle Party in the Kingdom. *Bates*, an Hiſtorian not guilty of favouring this Party too much in his Repreſentation of Facts, owns, "Oppoſition was "made to it by almoſt all the Presbyterian Miniſters "in *London*, and by many more out of many Counties, "and even by ſome Independents, in their Sermons "from the Pulpit, Conferences, Letters of Admonition, Supplications, Proteſtations, and Remonſtrances publiſhed to the World. They obteſted "them that they would not imbrue their Hands, and "imbrue the Kingdom in the Guilt of Royal Blood, "againſt the tremendous Obligations of ſo many Oaths, "againſt the publick and private Faith, ---- againſt the

" Laws of Nations, and the ſacred Dictates of holy " Scripture and Religion, and againſt the Advantage of " the Commonwealth." And yet theſe are the People, that once a Year ſtatedly are charged with the Murther of King *Charles* the Firſt; but how juſtly, let the impartial Part of Mankind, nay, let their Accuſers judge, upon a fair and full Hearing of the moſt unexceptionable Witneſſes both for and againſt them. Therefore it muſt be nothing but ſcandalous Ignorance of the Times and Facts we are now ſpeaking of, or ſomething worſe, in any to lay all the Blame of the Civil War and the Murther of King *Charles* upon the Presbyterians only, for it is what they who charge them thus, either do in their Conſciences know, or might eaſily know, does not belong to them: But if Men will, out of Spite and Rancour, paſs falſe Hiſtory upon their Hearers, in Contempt of the plaineſt and fulleſt Evidence of the Falſhood of what they aſſert, the Diſſenters muſt bear it as well as they can, till the *Civil Magiſtrate* may think proper to ſtop the Mouths of the Dealers in Scandal and vile Calumny. In the mean time it is a Satisfaction to them, that they know their *Forefathers* in general were *guiltleſs*, and that they are ſenſible all the unprejudiced Part of his Majeſty's Subjects believe they were innocent.

As falſe is it, that *they* are a People of *antimonarchical* and *rebellious Principles*, ſince their Sentiments concerning Civil Government are the ſame with thoſe of all true Patriots and real Friends to the preſent Government: Their political Principles are not dark and myſterious, nor concealed from the World; their Sermons and Comments upon Holy Scripture, their Confeſſion of Faith and their publick Declarations, their Remonſtrances and Conduct before and ſince the Year 1648, undeniably prove, they have always been Friends to the *Britiſh* Monarchy and our mixed Government, by King, Lords and Commons. Never were there a Set of People ſo intirely and ſteddily, ſo conſtantly and uniformly attached to the *Engliſh* Conſtitution as they have always been, and ſtill continue to be, notwithſtanding *the unreaſonable Hardſhips* they have met with *almoſt in all Reigns* from the higher Powers. They were never known in any Reign, particularly in late Reigns, to be concerned in Aſſaſſination-Plots, or in any Deſigns to defeat the Proteſtant Succeſſion; they are not the Perſons that in the laſt Reign, for Inſtance, of King *George* the Firſt

of

of glorious Memory, were try'd for promoting Riots and Tumults, for curſing their King and drinking the Pretender's Health, and for the late Rebellion moſt happily defeated at *Preſton* in *Lancaſhire*; the Rioters at *Oxford* and ſeveral other Places, and the Rebels taken at *Preſton*, were not, the World knows, Diſſenting Proteſtants. Many of theſe Rioters and Rebels, the Biſhops in a Declaration of theirs tell us, "were Perſons that valued "themſelves and were valued by others for a pretended "Zeal for the Church; nay, that ſeveral of them were "*Men in Holy Orders*, Miniſters of the Church of "*England*, who had abjured the Pretender, who yet "accompanied, countenanced and abetted the Rebels." And the Hiſtory of the Rebellion tells us, in all *Scotland* there were but *two Clergymen of the Epiſcopal Perſuaſion* that would pray for King *George*, and *but two who pretended to be Miniſters of the Kirk* that refuſed to pray for him. It is well known, that the Reſtoration was not a little owing to this Party, that they were as loyal Subjects as King *William of immortal Memory* had, as obedient and valuable as any Queen *Anne* had, and the moſt open as well as real Friends to the *late King George*, and as ſteddy and hearty in their Attachment to the *Illuſtrious* and *Auguſt Houſe of Hanover* as any Party whatever. Indeed they are avowed Enemies of Popery and Tyranny, of Slavery, and the abſurd Doctrine of a blind, unlimited Paſſive-Obedience and Non-Reſiſtance: They cannot, they acknowledge and publickly declare to the Powers of this World, believe in their Hearts and Conſciences as ſome pretend to believe, "that *Reſiſtance* is "*not lawful* for the Maintenance of the Liberties of our-"ſelves and others, nor for the Defence of Religion, nor "for the Preſervation of the Church and State, nor for "the Salvation of a Soul, no, nor *for the Redemption* "of the whole World." This is Divinity or Politicks, which you pleaſe, they cannot believe for the Reaſons ſhortly to be mention'd; and they are apt to ſuſpect, whether the Patrons of this Doctrine believe even their own Doctrine in Reality, not only becauſe it is a moſt abſurd one, but becauſe they cannot conceive how they who pretend to believe it, can, as many of them do, take Oaths to a Government founded upon open and undeniable Reſiſtance. Wherefore, the Diſſenters are almoſt ready to believe, that this is a Doctrine which ſome Clergymen preach only to ſerve a Turn, to flatter and

abuſe

abuſe (but in vain) their Prince, and exalt themſelves, juſt as it is probable *Montague*, *Manwaring* and ſome other Prieſts did in King *Charles*'s Reign, that Reign of Weakneſs and unhappy Adminiſtration, and unhappy *becauſe* directed and influenced *by the Prieſthood*, who are obſerved to be but *aukward and bungling Politicians*, and not to have a Greatneſs of Soul proper for the Conduct of publick Affairs. How have Pulpits rung, and Chriſtian Congregations been almoſt ſtunned with the Noiſe and Din of ſome Prieſts about Paſſive-Obedience and Non-Reſiſtance, under the Government of a weak Prince, whoſe Superſtition made them hope he wou'd condeſcend to be their Tool; and at other Times not a Word has been ſaid of it, becauſe a proper Seaſon did not offer! In King *James*'s Time, for Inſtance, tho' it had been a great Part of their Buſineſs in the two former Reigns to advance and ſpread this Doctrine, yet no ſooner did they perceive they were in Danger of being ejected by a Popiſh Prieſthood under a Popiſh Prince, but preſently they forgot all they had ſaid, and by their new Meaſures and Practices confuted their darling Doctrine. And from that Time till the latter End of Queen *Anne*'s Reign it was reckon'd a glorious Thing, for very good Reaſons, to reſiſt a lawleſs and tyrannical Prince. But becauſe in the Concluſion of her Reign publick Affairs began to take a new Turn agreeable to the Wiſhes of the Paſſive-Obedience and Non-Reſiſtance Prieſts, they alſo began in the moſt effectual Way to condemn their own Conduct as well as that of others at the Revolution. But ſince the Extinction of the Family of the *Stuarts*, and *the Succeſſion* of the *glorious Houſe of Hanover* in their Room, we have heard little or nothing of it. No, it is preach'd up, and it is practis'd down juſt as Occaſion ſerves; and the Believers of it aſſert it in Words, but contradict it in Actions according as their ſecular Intereſt requires. Sometimes this Doctrine is ſeaſonable, and at other Times nothing ſo ſeaſonable and opportune as a Diſtinction of a King *de Facto* and *de Jure*.

But whatever the Motives are which induce them to preach up this Doctrine, or to be ſilent about it, it is what all the old *Greeks* and *Romans*, Philoſophers and Orators, Hiſtorians and antient Biſhops of the Church; in a Word, it is what all Men in their right Senſes, in all Ages, could not believe. For it is unqueſtionable, that all Power or Authority is from God, as it is his Will

that

that his rational Creatures upon Earth ſhould live in Society, which cannot ſubſiſt unleſs ſome rule and others obey: And it is certain, that all Power or Degrees of Superiority are originally deſign'd for the Good of thoſe who are to be ſubject and to obey, becauſe the great Magiſtrate of the Univerſe governs it for the Good of the Whole, and has made us in particular, and preſerves and governs us for our Happineſs, as one End of his Rule and Government: He created and he ſuſtains us, not that he might ſport himſelf with our Miſeries, but that he might communicate Happineſs to us in proper Degrees. And certainly *Magiſtracy*, which is the Ordinance of ſo great a Friend and Lover of Mankind, muſt be deſign'd for the mutual Happineſs of *the Magiſtrate and Subject*; and *eſpecially of the latter*, becauſe it is Happineſs of greater Moment, it being the Happineſs of many, than the Happineſs of one ſingle Perſon: *Rex eſt ſingulis major, univerſis minor.* Therefore when the Apoſtle deſcribes to us the Powers that be of God, he tells us they are the Miniſters of God to us for Good, a Terror to Evil-doers, and a Praiſe and a Glory unto them that do well. To reſiſt theſe therefore whom the Apoſtle deſcribes, is to reſiſt the Ordinance of God, and a great Crime it muſt be: But to reſiſt Magiſtrates who are not Miniſters of God to us for Good, and who are not a Terror unto Evil-doers, but a Praiſe and a Glory to them, and a Terror unto them that do well, is not to reſiſt the Ordinance of God, but of wicked Men, and cannot be the ſinful Reſiſtance which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, becauſe the Reſiſtance he ſpeaks of, is Reſiſtance to good Magiſtrates, and not to lawleſs Tyrants. So *David*, when he ſpeaks of the ſupreme Powers, tells us, *He that rules over Men muſt be juſt, ruling in the Fear of God: And he ſhall be as the Light of the Morning when the Sun ariſes, even the Morning without Clouds; as the tender Graſs ſpringing out of the Earth, by the clear ſhining after Rain.* He that can believe, that Divine Providence ſets up any Prince, to engage in Wars merely for his own Grandeur, and to increaſe the Number of his Slaves, to oppreſs and torment his Subjects, to tyrannize over them, and uſe them like Brutes, is prepared for believing any thing, tho' ever ſo abſurd, concerning the Bleſſed God. If therefore it be not the divine Pleaſure, that Princes ſhould tyrannize over their Subjects, it cannot be diſpleaſing to God for Subjects firſt to try to

put

put a Stop to their Grievances by laying them before their Prince; and then, if this will not do, by actual Reſiſtance. This is indeed Doctrine which has had many foul Names given it, even by thoſe who have put it in Practice: But *it* is evidently a Part of *the Law of Nature*, and what will weigh perhaps *more with ſome*, it is the Doctrine of the *Church of England*, and the Opinion of the State too. That it is a Part of the Law of Nature, has juſt now been proved: And that it is the Opinion of the State, is evident not only from the Revolution, but from the Sentence paſs'd by the Government upon Dr. *Sacheverel* for preaching againſt this Doctrine. And that it is the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, is undeniable both from her *Practice* and *her Prayers*. It is undeniable from *her Practice*, becauſe there is ſcarce a Reign ſince the Reformation, in which ſhe has not *given Countenance and Aſſiſtance* to oppreſſed Subjects *defending themſelves* againſt their tyrannical Princes; as to the *Scots* in Queen *Elizabeth*'s Reign, who took up Arms againſt the Queen Regent; to the *French* Proteſtants once and again in the ſame Reign, to the Natives of *Flanders* and *Hollanders* againſt the Duke of *Alva* their Governor, to the *Rochellers* in King *Charles* the Firſt's Reign, *&c.* And this Doctrine of the Lawfulneſs of Reſiſtance in oppreſſed Subjects to their mighty Oppreſſors, appears to be the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, from *her publick Prayers* for People practiſing this very Doctrine. The late Biſhop of *Sarum* tells us, in the Year 1628, during the Siege of *Rochel*, there was a publick Faſt appointed over *England* upon that Account; and the Beſieged were prayed for as our Brethren, and Succeſs was prayed for to them by that Form, which Form his Lordſhip had ſeen. And in the Service appointed for the Fifth of *November*, there is a Collect which has theſe Expreſſions: "Almighty God and heavenly Father, who didſt likewiſe upon this Day conduct thy Servant our late "King, and bring him ſafely into this Kingdom, to "preſerve us from the late Attempts of our Enemies to "bereave us of our Religion and Laws." And in another Collect for this Day, God is bleſſed for giving his late Majeſty a ſafe Arrival, and making all Oppoſition fall before him. And in the laſt Prayer appointed for this Day we have theſe Words, "O God——who on "this Day alſo didſt begin to give us a mighty Deliverance

" rance from the open Tyranny and Oppreſſion of the " ſame cruel and blood-thirſty Enemies: We bleſs and " adore thy Majeſty as for the former, ſo for this thy " late marvellous Loving-kindneſs to our Church and " Nation in the Preſervation of our Religion and Li- " berties, *&c.*" So that it is clear enough, this Doctrine, which in Diſſenters looks to ſome to be very bad and of ill Conſequence, yet it is what the Church of *England* has not only believed, but put in Practice. And as plain is it, that the Church has no more Reaſon to boaſt than her Neighbours of her Obedience and Loyalty to the ſupreme Power.

But tho' the Diſſenters are not Believers of an indefeaſible hereditary Right and the Patriarchal Scheme, or of the Diſtinction of a King *de Jure* and *de Facto*; tho' they cannot think that the ſupreme Power is given by God to ſome to be tranſmitted down to others by an hereditary Right of Succeſſion, and that theſe Perſons ſhould have a Right to oppreſs their Subjects, and yet be accountable to none but God: Yet it is their real Opinion, that *Reſiſtance* ſhould not be made but in Caſes of *extreme Neceſſity*, like that which was the Occaſion and Ground of Reſiſtance to King *James* at the Revolution. They are ſatisfied, that good Princes, whether of this or that Perſuaſion in Matters of Religion, Princes that know no other End of Government, and purſue no other but their own and the Happineſs of their Subjects conjunctly; that Princes, in a Word, who anſwer St. *Paul*'s Character of a Prince that ſhould not be reſiſted, are as the Breath of the People's Noſtrils, the Anointed of the Lord, and highly to be valued as the moſt conſiderable Part of the Body Politick. And whether they do not think thus of Princes of this Character, let the World, let the ſupreme Powers, and all unprejudiced People judge from the Hiſtory of their paſt Conduct, and from their preſent Behaviour. It is utterly falſe, that they believe Reſiſtance to the ſupreme Power is lawful, for every Diſappointment and Provocation that they meet with, or that *Dominion* is *founded in Grace*, and none ſhould rule but a truly virtuous Man; for they are ſatisfied, *a vicious Man* may be *a good Prince*, and poſſibly a *better Prince* than *one of a devout* and religious Temper, tho' they are ſenſible it is infinitely better both for the Prince himſelf, and in general for his Subjects too, for him to be both a good Man and a good Ma-

giſtrate. And a ſcandalous Falſhood is it, that they are againſt Submiſſion and Obedience to any Princes but ſuch as are of their particular religious Perſuaſion; they heartily love and chearfully obey their Prince, *whatever his Faith* in Religion be, be he *a Calviniſt* or *a Lutheran*, *Epiſcopalian* or *Presbyterian*, &c. provided he be the Prince the Apoſtle deſcribes. It is *another Party* in theſe Kingdoms, of conſiderable Number, and uncommon Zeal for the eſtabliſhed Church as they pretend, that lays a greater Streſs *upon particular Schemes*, and ſpeculative religious Opinions in the Magiſtrate, than the Diſſenters do; a Party that in the laſt Reign, of King *George* the Firſt of glorious Memory, argued *the Danger* of the Church from the King's *being a Lutheran*, as they ſuppoſed. See *The Advice to the Freeholders of Great Britain.* In the Opinion of that Writer and his Party, it ſeems the Church was more in danger from a *Lutheran* than a *Papiſt*, from the glorious Houſe of *Hanover*, than from the *Pretender* and his Family. But this and any other ſuch way of thinking of the Importance of the particular religious Perſuaſion of the Prince to the Welfare of theſe Nations, is not the religious or political Scheme of the Diſſenters. Let the World then judge whether theſe be the People who are ſaid to be conceived in Sedition, and brought forth in virtual Rebellion, and brought up in Treaſons, as ſome ſorry Declaimers upon the 30th of *January* have expreſſed themſelves. As truly might they ſay, that they were begotten by wild Beaſts, and brought up as the wild Cannibals in *America*, and delight only in human Fleſh. Well therefore would it be for the *empty Haranguers* upon this Anniverſary, well for *their Hearers*, and for *the Nation* in general, were *the Obſervation of this Day laid aſide* by the ſame Authority that appointed it; for then theſe Calumniators would not have one Opportunity in particular of talking and haranguing themſelves into a Rage againſt their Neighbours, and of raiſing an unhappy Ferment in the Society, and rendering thoſe odious for their Political Principles, who deſerve quite other ſort of Treatment from them.

F. To ſay no more of their Political Principles, let us come to their *Religious Sentiments*, and eſpecially to their Doctrine concerning *Grace* and *free Will*, *Election* and *Reprobation*. For if their *Political Notions* and Fancies be not *ſeditious* and *rebellious*, *their religious Notions*

Notions concerning *God* ſeem to be little leſs than blaſphemous, and concerning *Grace* and *free Will* to be *deſtructive* of all Religion. For of God they ſuppoſe, that he has made a conſiderable Part of Mankind on purpoſe to make them miſerable for ever, or has included them in his Decree of Reprobation, which leaves them without any Poſſibility of being ſaved at laſt. And of Grace and the Will of Man in his preſent State, their Opinions are wild and ſubverſive of all moral Goodneſs, becauſe they imagine that God works irreſiſtibly upon the Minds of Men, and that Man is not a Free-Agent in Religion.

S. If theſe were the Opinions of the Diſſenters concerning God and Man which you mention, I ſhould not like them ſo well as I do, becauſe I am no leſs perſuaded of the *pernicious Tendency* of theſe Sentiments than any others whatever: But I hope they are the Opinions of but a few only, if of any of them; for ſuch as I am acquainted with, and I am told almoſt all of them believe otherwiſe concerning theſe Matters: The moſt of them abhor theſe Doctrines, and their Miniſters preach as warmly againſt them as any in other Communions do. Concerning God, they believe he is not only the greateſt but the beſt of Beings, and as much ſuperior to all other Beings *in Goodneſs* as *in Power* and Majeſty, and therefore that it was not poſſible for him, to make ſuch a Decree as you mention, any more than it is, that he ſhould act contrary unto his own Perfections, and the eternal and unalterable Rules of Right and Equity; that an infinitely good and perfect Being cannot take Pleaſure in the Miſery of his Creatures, when Juſtice and Government do not require it. To them as well as to others the *infinite Benignity* of the Deity is the greateſt and moſt *evident Truth*, next to his Exiſtence and his natural Attributes. Therefore, as he is a Being of inexhauſtible Goodneſs and abſolute Perfection, it is evident to them, not only that there can be *no ſuch abſolute Decree* of Reprobation, but that the bleſſed God is *not indifferent* about the Happineſs of his Creatures, but loves them all better than they do themſelves, and heartily deſires the Happineſs of them all. To ſuch Apprehenſions as theſe concerning the Deity both the Light of Nature and ſupernatural Revelation lead them; the Light of Nature, as it repreſents him a Being of all Goodneſs, Patience and Long-ſuffering; and ſupernatural

tural Revelation, as it exhorts all to love and practiſe Virtue, and aſſureth them that God would not have any to periſh, but all to repent and live. And of this all-perfect Being they are as fully perſuaded as any can be, that he means as he ſays, and does not ſpeak to us with any dark Diſtinction between his ſecret and revealed Will. Therefore they conclude, that it is not owing to God, but to Sinners, if they become not *virtuous here* and *happy hereafter*, to an Abuſe of that Freedom and Liberty wherewith God has indued them. So that nothing needs to be ſaid further in Anſwer to what is objected to the Diſſenters, with reference to the Will and Power of Man. For their real Sentiment is, that *he* is a *free Agent*, and that his Maker lays before him ſuch Motives and offers ſuch Arguments to his Conſideration, as are ſufficient to perſuade him to a Life of Virtue; and beſides, that God is ready to afford him all ſuch Aſſiſtance as may be neceſſary to his Progreſs in the Paths of Virtue here, and to his Attainment of Happineſs hereafter. In a Word, the Opinion of theſe People is, that God heartily deſires and ſufficiently contributes to the compleat and endleſs Happineſs of Man, and that Man is a free Rational Agent, who may be happy if he will. This is the Belief of moſt, I do not ſay all, of this Party. And are there not different Sentiments in thoſe of the Eſtabliſhment, relating to theſe Matters? It is not to be denied there are, and there's a great Contradiction between the 39 Articles of the Church and the Faith of many of her Members, particularly between the 17th Article and their Explications of it; ſince, as Mr. *Whiſton* obſerves, there is *ſcarce one* Miniſter of the Church who has conſidered the Articles, *that does believe* them in their *proper original Senſe* and Meaning. But they are not, I am apt to think, to be blamed for *contradicting ſeveral* of their own Articles, and for preaching in Reality againſt them, *but rather for ſubſcribing* Doctrines which they do not believe themſelves, *and encouraging* and *impoſing* this Subſcription upon others.

F. The Diſſenters place moſt of their Religion in believing in Chriſt and loving him, and make light of Moral Doctrines and Moral Duties, and can ſcarce bear them being preached in their Pulpits. And their Marks and Signs of Goodneſs are many of them odd enough.

S. True,

S. True, they place *a Part*, but *not the moſt* of Chriſtianity in a mere Belief in Chriſt and in Love to him. And ſince the New Teſtament teaches them to do ſo, telling them that whoſoever loves not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, muſt be an *Anathema* and a *Maranatha*, and if we believe not in him, we muſt die in our Sins; they think they ſhould not be blamed for it by their Fellow-Chriſtians, and cannot but almoſt wonder that their Love to Jeſus has been banter'd and ridicul'd, and they have been jeer'd for their *Amorous Diſcourſes* upon this Subject, as they have been ſtiled by the *drolling* and *prophane Wit* of ſome that have writ againſt them. This may indeed be aſtoniſhing to any Chriſtian, that conſiders the infinite Obligations we are all under to this glorious Perſon the Son of God, for his Incarnation, his unſpotted Life and moſt admirable Doctrine, for his uncontroulable Miracles and his *generous Sufferings*, and for all that he has done and ſuffered for the degenerate Race of Mankind, in order to reſcue them out of a State of Darkneſs and Deluſion, of Superſtition and Idolatry, of Sin and Miſery, into a State of Knowledge and Goodneſs, of Friendſhip with God and compleat Happineſs. But if their Love to Jeſus muſt be made a Jeſt of, they deſire they may always be ſneer'd at and ridicul'd upon this Account, if it muſt be ſo. And ſenſible they are of the Neceſſity and Excellency of Faith in Jeſus, or of a firm and *Rational Belief* of his Doctrine, as it is the *Root* or *a vital Source* of true Chriſtianity. It muſt be owned, that ſome Time ſince ſome of them have expreſſed themſelves but careleſly and coarſely ſometimes upon theſe two great and eſſential Branches of the Chriſtian Temper and Spirit: But let their later Diſcourſes in Print concerning theſe Subjects be read, and the Sermons they preach upon them be heard by well diſpoſed Minds, and they do not fear any Cenſure for rude or flat Expreſſions. For their Adverſaries own, they have laid them aſide, and compoſe their Diſcourſes with Care, and deliver what is agreeable to the Dignity of a worſhipping Aſſembly.

With regard to their *Marks* and *Signs* of a virtuous and happy State and Condition; they have formerly been ſufficiently laughed at for them without much Reaſon, when a candid Temper would have put a good Conſtruction upon them, and not have taken ſuch things by a wrong Handle: Whereas, a profane Diſpoſition by unfair

fair Methods may make almoſt any thing look ridiculous. But let the Unthinking and Vain ſay what they pleaſe upon this Head, theſe People know very well, that the ſure and *comprehenſive Evidence* of a virtuous State is *uniform Obedience* to the divine Laws, or, that fearing God and keeping his Commandments is the *only ſure Proof* of Sincerity, and *the neceſſary Condition* upon our Part of our Acceptance with God. Wherefore it is a downright Falſhood, to aſſert that they generally make light of *Moral Duties*, and can ſcarce bear to have them mention'd in their Pulpits; that they make no Conſcience of *lying*, while they *will not ſwear*; and of committing Uncleanneſs and defrauding their Neighbour, of being cenſorious and uncharitable, tho' they can be very nice and ſcrupulous as to Ceremonies; that they can ſtrain at a Gnat, and ſwallow a Camel; that they will make long Prayers, and let all about them hear how devout they are, when at the ſame time they can be guilty almoſt of all manner of Wickedneſs. They are not to learn, that *Obedience* is better than *Sacrifice*; that God is ſo much a Friend to Mankind, that he will not be content with any Duties performed to him, while thoſe of Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs and Truth to Men are neglected; and that that Man's Religion is vain, who is not influenced by an extenſive and generous Benevolence to his Fellow-Creatures. But methinks before *others blame* the Moral Conduct of *theſe People*, they ſhould be more regular and virtuous in their own: And who are more ſo, they or thoſe whom they condemn, let the well-diſpoſed and virtuous Part of Mankind judge.

F. But if the Principles and Practices of this People be as you repreſent them, how comes it to paſs that they are *ſo much deſpiſed*, and their Numbers do *decline apace?* For in every Place they are ſpoken againſt, and I am told that they themſelves complain to one another of their Intereſt ſinking almoſt every where.

S. If I muſt give an Anſwer to this Queſtion, it is, that it is in a great meaſure owing to the Clergy of the Eſtabliſhment, that the Diſſenters are thus deſpiſed and under ſo popular an Odium: For what has been the Deſign of many of the Clergy particularly upon the famous 30th of *January*, and at other Times, but to render the Diſſenters as odious as poſſible? They give terrible but unjuſt Repreſentations of them to their Auditories, and thus fill their Minds with *ſtrange Opinions* of them, and their

their Hearts with *rancorous Paſſions* againſt them. So that at certain Times Diſſenters may tell, without going to hear the Clergy, that they have been miſrepreſenting them to their People, from the Treatment they meet with from them. But I wou'd obſerve here once for all, that when I ſay the unmannerly and provoking Treatment that Diſſenters meet with from many of their Neighbours, is owing to the Miſrepreſentations given of them by the *Clergy*, I now and always have meant *the Dregs* of the Prieſthood, with all the *ſuperſtitious* and *bigotted* amongſt the ſuperior Ranks of the Clergy; for I know there are ſeveral in the whole Body of the Clergy, that ſcorn from their very Hearts any ſuch Practices as theſe. Wou'd but the Meſſengers and Ambaſſadors of Chriſt Jeſus, as they call themſelves, either be ſilent or ſay nothing but what is true of this Party, there's no Doubt but they wou'd be better thought of and better treated by them that differ from them: But while many will ſay what they pleaſe, and affirm according to their Paſſions, and People will believe them implicitly, there is nothing to be expected but that they who have been doomed to a State of deplorable Miſery, ſhou'd meet with juſt the ſame unfair Treatment as formerly.

But I muſt give the Reaſons why *they* are *ſuch a Handful* of People, and why their Number is decreaſing too, or aſſign the Cauſes of the Decay of the Proteſtant Diſſenting Intereſt; a Subject *a Juvenile Writer* not long ago conſidered a little, and then left them. And the beſt Reaſon I can give is, that the Multitude will be of that Party that meets with the moſt Encouragement from the Powers of this World. Thus it always has been; *a ſecular Church* with her Wealth and Preferments may draw over to her *great Numbers* of the Learned as well as of the Unlearned. It is no Matter what the eſtabliſhed Religion of a Commonwealth be, whether true or falſe, the Majority of the Community will be of it; thus it is every where in Proteſtant and Popiſh Countries, in *Heathen* and *Mahometan* Nations; *the eſtabliſhed Faith* has the *moſt Believers*, and the *eſtabliſhed Worſhip* the *moſt Defenders*. No wonder therefore, that this, which is the Caſe in all other Countries, ſhou'd be the Caſe in our own. For in all the Revolutions of the external Forms of Religion amongſt us, *the Majority* has gone over to *the Civil Magiſtrate's Religion:* In Popiſh Reigns his Religion

Religion was embraced by almoſt all his Subjects; and in Proteſtant Reigns his Religion was ſtill that of the Multitude. Biſhop *Burnet*, ſpeaking of the Complaiſance of the Popiſh Clergy to Queen *Elizabeth*, tells us, "it "was found of 9400 Beneficed Men in *England*, there "were no more than 14 Biſhops, ſix Abbots, twelve "Deans, twelve Archdeacons, fifteen Heads of Col-"leges, fifty Prebendaries, and eighty Rectors of Pa-"riſhes, that had left their Benefices upon the Account "of Religion, ſo compliant were the *Papiſts* generally. "And indeed the Biſhops after this Time had the ſame "Apprehenſions of Danger into which Religion was "brought by the Jugglings of the greateſt Part of the "Clergy, who retain'd their Affections to the old Su-"perſtition that thoſe in King *Edward*'s Time had. "So that if Queen *Elizabeth* had not lived as long as "ſhe did, till that Generation was dead, and a new "Set of Men better educated and principled were grown "up and put in their Rooms; and if a Prince of ano-"ther Religion had ſucceeded before that Time, proba-"bly they had turned about again to the old Superſti-"tions, as nimbly as they had done before in Queen "*Mary*'s Days. That which ſupported the ſuperſti-"tious Party in King *Edward*'s Time the moſt, was, "that many great Biſhops did ſecretly favour and en-"courage them." *Hiſt. Reform.* Vol. II. p. 401. And in King *James*'s Time Predeſtination was a fundamental Truth amongſt the Clergy, becauſe it was ſo in his Opinion, and Free-Willers were to be treated as wild Beaſts, either to be lock'd up in Priſon, or to be baniſhed their Country: And in King *Charles* the Firſt's Time, becauſe Preferment ran high upon the other Side, *Arminianiſm* recovered Credit, and keeps it ſtill, though it be contrary to the 39 Articles. No, *it is impoſſible* for the Civil Magiſtrate to impoſe an Oath upon a *Secular and Avaritious Clergy* which they *will not take*, and give them a Creed or a Syſtem of Articles which they will not upon *the Word of Command* declare their unfeigned Aſſent to, though they may believe ſcarce one Word of it. Men of this Character will for the ſake of Benefices and Preferments affirm and deny, and conform to the Civil Magiſtrate in his religious Sentiments, though it be to their eternal Diſgrace. Thus the *Aſiatick* Biſhops *ſubſcribed* to the *Condemnation* of the Decrees of the Council

Council of *Chalcedon*, and inform'd *Baſiliſcus* the Emperor, that their Subſcription was voluntary. And yet when *Baſiliſcus* was depoſed, they immediately ſubſcribed *to the Truth* of theſe very Decrees, and ſwore their firſt Subſcription was involuntary. And this is no new thing under the Sun; the Paſſions of *Mankind in general*, and eſpecially of *ſome in particular*, are ſtill the ſame in one Age as in another, and under all external Forms of Religion. It wou'd therefore be ſuch a Wonder as the World has not yet ſeen, if People ſhou'd now forbear to embrace the publick Faith and Worſhip, and become *Nonconformiſts* to the *publick Religion*; this is what paſt Experience and the preſent State of human Nature forbid us to look for; *the moſt* will be of *that Mind* in Religion, that *the publick Wiſdom* is of, and reſign up their Conſciences to be directed by the publick Conſcience. The wiſe *Socrates* had but *a few Followers*, our Saviour had but a ſmall Flock, and his Church during the Heathen Perſecution was ſmall alſo: But as ſoon as the Empire became Chriſtian, and the Chriſtian Religion was interwoven *into the Civil Conſtitution*, the Chriſtian Community increaſed apace, and almoſt the whole *Roman* Empire became Chriſtian all on a ſudden. And under the ſucceeding Emperors, juſt as *Orthodoxy* or *Arianiſm* was countenanced by the Emperor, his Faith was the Faith of his Subjects in general. So that the great Prelate who being asked which was the beſt Religion, anſwered, That which wou'd keep a Coach and Six, was not *very ſingular* in his Conceit, though he might be ſo in ſo frankly opening his Mind. To embrace a Faith that is not in Faſhion, and a Mode of Worſhip not in Vogue, requires in a thinking and conſiderate Man a ſtrong Conviction of the Truth of the one, and of the Acceptableneſs of the other unto God, a virtuous Reſolution to follow the Dictates of his own Mind, a generous Contempt of the World, and a firm Purpoſe to pleaſe his Maker by a Life of virtuous Simplicity and Sincerity. But *this* is a State of Mind that is *not very common*; moſt are of the publick Religion for no other Reaſons than becauſe their Parents before them were of it, and becauſe they were brought up in it, and becauſe the Great and Mighty of their Country are of it.

Now I ſhould be glad to hear if you have any more Objections againſt this Party upon this Head we are now upon.

F. I have no more that are ſo material as theſe that I have mentioned, unleſs this be one, That they ſeem to believe that a great Part of Religion conſiſts only in *outward Performances*, which are only the *Means* and *Inſtruments* of Religion, and *not the thing itſelf*; as in hearing Sermons, reading the Bible, and making long Prayers at ſtated Times, not only in their Meeting-Houſes and at Home, but, as I am told, amongſt one another in ſome Neighbour's Houſe, where they are loud enough to let all that are nigh underſtand what they are about, like the *Phariſees* of old, that pray'd in the Corners of Streets, and at the ſame Time could devour Widows Houſes, and be guilty of great Wickedneſs: So that they ſeem to be like them, guilty of vile Hypocriſy; and you cannot be ignorant how univerſally this is laid to their Charge. Let us hear how you will juſtify them.

S. I do not pretend to know the Hearts of any but my own, and therefore not to ſay who are and who are not guilty of Hypocriſy; but ſhall leave this to him who is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart, and judges not according to outward Appearance as Man does. But certainly we, who cannot judge otherwiſe, ought to believe our Neighbours are ſincere in their Profeſſion and Practice of Religion, as long as they give no juſt Ground by their external Conduct to think otherwiſe of them; for Chriſtian *Charity believes all Things, hopes all Things*, and puts a favourable Conſtruction upon all Actions that are capable of it; and not to do ſo ſhews not only want of this glorious Virtue, but that there is ſomething elſe in the room of it that is very bad, as Envy and Malice, Hatred and Ill-nature. Therefore it cannot certainly be known by the Adverſaries of this Party, that they are ſuch wretched Hypocrites as they have been often repreſented; but for any thing they know, they may be as ſincere and free from Hypocriſy as thoſe that charge them with it, ſince their profeſſed Opinion concerning the Exterior of Religion, as hearing Sermons, reading good Books, and other ſuch Duties, is this, that *they* are *only the Means* of Religion, but not the Thing itſelf; and that People may ſtatedly perform theſe Duties, and yet in Reality be no more virtuous than a Man openly

openly vicious and profane. They know external Religion, ſeparate from real Virtue and Goodneſs, is an Abomination to the bleſſed God, who ſees where there is only a Shew and Appearance of Goodneſs. Ignorant they are not, that God frequently in divine Revelation expreſſes his great Abhorrence of *this Kind of Hypocriſy* in the *Jewiſh* Church: Their Miniſters caution them as frequently and earneſtly as any Miniſters of Religion do their People; and the Body of this People are as converſant in their Bible as others about them are: So that they cannot thro' Miſtake place Religion in the Means and Inſtruments of it. But then as the *External Performances* in Religion, which have been mentioned, *are the Means* of it, therefore it is their firm Belief, that in order to attain the End, the Means muſt be uſed; and therefore they are frequently engaged in the Performance of theſe inſtrumental Duties, and wiſh that many in the Chriſtian Church would not live in a ſcandalous Neglect of them. For tho' a Man may live in the Practice of theſe Things, and yet be no better by what he does, it is evident that *he who neglects* the Means of Virtue, *cannot be* virtuous. And if ſome of the Diſſenters be heard at their private Devotions, this only proves at the moſt, that they are not ſo prudent as they might be, unleſs they make ſuch an oſtentatious Shew of Devotion as the *Phariſees* did to whom they are compared, which none do that I know or have ever heard of. Nor do they in general diſcover by their Conduct that their Profeſſion of Religion is empty and hypocritical; their Behaviour towards Men is as unblameable as that of their Neighbours, and their Self-government as little liable to Objection as that of others. Therefore for any thing that appears to the Obſervation of the World, they are ſincere in their Profeſſion of Religion; and therefore for any to charge them in groſs with Hypocriſy, is to bewray great Uncharitableneſs. In ſhort, to *deſpiſe* and ridicule *the Means* of Virtue *as many* do, looks very ill in ſeveral Reſpects, and is offenſive to every Mind that is concern'd for the Intereſt of Virtue.

F. But there's yet another material Objection againſt the Faith of this Sect, which is, that they are againſt *a Toleration* of any but themſelves, witneſs their Sermons and other Writings in the Time of the Uſurpation, in which they were, as much as Men could be,

againſt a Toleration of Churchmen, &c. And notwithſtanding all the Stir they now make about *an univerſal Toleration* of all Parties, there is no great Reaſon to believe but the modern Diſſenters are of the very ſame Mind concerning this Matter with their Predeceſſors in *Oliver*'s Time, for the Aſſembly's Larger Catechiſm, their admired Form of ſound Words, as they call it, teaches us to interpret the ſecond Commandment as forbidding a Toleration of *all falſe Religion*. So that as in the Uſurper's Time *Toleration* was the *Nation-deſtroying Sin*, and they ſaid that the Devil muſt be fetched out of People's Conſcience, &c. we might hear our modern Diſſenters ſpeak the ſame Language concerning Toleration that their Forefathers did, were the Tables turned as much in their Favour as they were then. For beſides that an univerſal Toleration is condemned by *their Catechiſm*, do they *not practiſe* according to it amongſt themſelves when they think it proper, and according to that little Power they have, perſecute Men of their own Party, for *ſpeculative Opinions* which they cannot approve? Did not Mr. *Emlyn* in *Dublin*, and other Miniſters of their own in the North of *Ireland*, Mr. *Simſon* in *Scotland*, and Mr. *Pierce* at *Exeter*, &c. feel all the Influence of this Doctrine of theirs againſt Toleration which it was in their Power to make them feel? It is therefore no regarding what they now offer in Favour of a general Toleration, nor any believing what they ſay about it, becauſe both their Rule of Faith and their Practice are a Contradiction to the Notion of ſuch a Toleration.

S. The Matters of Fact you here object againſt them are *too evident* to be denied, and *too vile* to be palliated; there were ſeveral of them in *Oliver*'s Time Enemies to a neceſſary Toleration in Religion, and the Perſons you have particularly mention'd, have not met with that Treatment that was to be expected from a People intirely in the Intereſt of religious Liberty. Yet in *Oliver*'s Time, the *moſt learned and judicious Part* of the Preſbyterian Clergy were quite of *another Mind* concerning Toleration of religious Sects and Parties, and were as much for it as others were againſt it. And it is very probable, that the Aſſembly of Divines at *Weſtminſter* never dreamt of making their Confeſſion of Faith a Teſt of Orthodoxy to Miniſters and People; for it was

not ſubſcribed by any Member of that Aſſembly, but the Prolocutor, the Aſſeſſors and Clerks, juſt as the Acts of all ſuch Conventions are by the Præſes and Clerk as the Acts of ſuch Conventions. Nor does it appear that any, whether a Miniſter or a Layman, *was required* for the Space of forty Years after the Confeſſion was compoſed, *to ſubſcribe* or aſſent to it as a Term of Chriſtian Communion. Nay, Mr. *Nye*, a Member of the Aſſembly, and of no great Zeal for Chriſtian Liberty, tells us, "That the *Scots* Commiſſioners in the "Aſſembly propoſed, that the Anſwers in the Aſſembly's Shorter Catechiſm ſhould be ſubſcribed by all "the Members of the Aſſembly, intending very probably to make them a Standard of Orthodoxy: But "the Aſſembly rejected the Motion of the Commiſſioners, after a conſiderable Number in the Aſſembly "had ſhewn it was an unwarrantable Impoſition upon "Chriſtians, and thus that Matter was then dropped." *Nye's Beams of former Light*, publiſhed in 1660.

This Aſſembly has alſo declared our Conſciences are free from the Commandments of Men, and that the fallible Deciſions of any Synod or Aſſembly, *&c.* of Men, are not to be the Rule of our Faith and Practice. And here let me obſerve, that the *Church of Geneva*, from which our Adverſaries repreſent us as taking our Articles of Faith and Modes of Worſhip, in the Year 1716 conſented *to the taking away* the Subſcription to their celebrated *Formula Conſenſus*, which had for a long Time been made a Term of Miniſterial Communion; for at that Time this great Grievance in the Church was removed by the Council of 200, at the Requeſt of the Miniſters and Profeſſors of the Church and Academy there. Since which Time Peace and Truth, and every thing indiſputably good has remarkably revived and flouriſhed there. An Example moſt worthy to be obſerved in all Chriſtian Churches where human Standards of divine Truth and religious Faith are continued, and Submiſſion to human Authority in the Kingdom of Jeſus is ſtill required; for the ſame Cauſe would, in all Probability, produce the ſame glorious Effects.

It is true too, that many of the Miniſters and People of this Denomination at preſent have openly declared their Diſlike of the Treatment which thoſe you have made a particular Mention of, met with from their own Party.

Party. And tho' ſome of them are ſtill for impoſing Subſcription to human Standards of Orthodoxy, all that know any thing of this People, know it is a Method directly contrary unto their avowed Principles as Proteſtant Diſſenters, and a Method which many of them abhor and diſcourage as much as they poſſibly can, as is evident from the Conduct of ſeveral towards the Perſons who have been particularly mention'd, eſpecially from the Conduct of the Miniſters at *Salters-Hall*, in Reference to Mr. *Pierce* at *Exeter*. *The beſt Writers* alſo amongſt them, the World may ſee, are all *hearty Friends* to a General Toleration; and thoſe amongſt them who are againſt Submiſſion to human Teſts and Standards of divine Truth, are a *growing Number*, and hope in Proceſs of Time the Remains of perſecuting Notions and Doctrines will have little or no Place amongſt this Body of People. How ſtrenuouſly and with what Variety of Argument have they wrote in Defence of Chriſtian Liberty, againſt all Impoſition upon the Conſciences of Men, and againſt *all Methods* of Perſecution both ſmall and great, not only againſt Subſcription to the Articles and Confeſſions of other Parties, but to the Confeſſion and Catechiſm of their own Party. They as well as others have proved, to the Conviction of all unprejudiced and impartial Men, that *Chriſt Jeſus is ſole Lawgiver* in his own Kingdom, and that no fallible Aſſembly or Synod, or Convocation or Council, or any Church-Convention whatever, has any Authority from him to make new Laws for his Subjects, and appoint Terms of Church-Communion which he has not appointed: That whoever pretend to ſuch Authority as this, act not by any Authority derived from him, but by an uſurped Power which is contrary to the plaineſt and moſt important Laws of his Kingdom: That all Uſe of ſuch Power in them who claim it, is *Sedition* and *Tyranny* in the Church, and *Obedience* to it is *ſlaviſh Compliance* in the People: That impoſing the Deciſions of Men upon the Conſciences of Chriſtians, is not only Antichriſtian, but contrary to the Principles of Proteſtants, eſpecially of Proteſtant Diſſenters: That *it* is erecting a Kind of a Popiſh Inquiſition over Men's Conſciences, and tends to nothing but promoting an Uniformity of Ignorance and implicit Faith, to making Men either *Fools* or *Knaves* in the Buſineſs of Religion, and drawing them off from the

the Study of the Scriptures; to bringing *inquiſitive and honeſt* Men into great Straits and Difficulties, and making *the Dull* and Stupid, or *the Inſincere* and Unrighteous, who can ſubſcribe any Thing and take any Oath, *fat and flouriſh like a green Bay-Tree:* That, in a Word, this Method is contrary to Revelation, and conducive to no End but what is bad. All this the Diſſenters have openly and frequently proved againſt all Adverſaries of Chriſtian Liberty both amongſt themſelves and all other Parties. And, as was ſaid before, the Friends to Chriſtian Liberty and a general Toleration are growing, and ſuperior, it is hoped, in this Kingdom to thoſe who are in a contrary Way of thinking upon this Subject. It is therefore unfair to charge the Diſſenters with being Enemies to a Toleration of any but themſelves, merely becauſe ſome long before they were born ignorantly and weakly declared againſt it, and becauſe ſome amongſt them at preſent act in Contradiction to their declared and avowed Principles. If there be any believing of Men in what they ſay, *the Majority* of this People are as real and *hearty Friends* to an extenſive Toleration and to Chriſtian Liberty as any in the World. They ſee moſt clearly there is *no Teſt* or Standard of Orthodoxy can be framed, but *the moſt* will declare their Aſſent and Conſent to it, whatever their own private Sentiments be, if it have the Countenance of the Civil Magiſtrate, and the Motives and Arguments of this World upon its Side.

Conclusion.

F. Since I have now offered all that is of Moment againſt the Diſſenters that at preſent occurs to my Thoughts, with regard to their Separation, their Teachers, their Worſhip, and their Faith; and ſince you have ſaid more in Anſwer to them than I expected from you, I have a mind to hear what you have to ſay againſt us, as well as what you have to ſay for yourſelf, for Variety of Matter and Argument is grateful in a Debate, as you ſay it is in Devotion.

S. But I muſt beg your Excuſe from *ſpeaking out* upon this Head, leſt I ſhould bring myſelf into a Snare; I ſhall therefore endeavour to expreſs myſelf with neceſſary Caution, leſt they who wou'd be glad of an Advantage againſt me, ſhou'd have one. And I chooſe, as it is prudent for me, firſt to tell you what ſome other People think

think of that which you eſteem next to divine Revelation, the Book of Common-Prayer. They of the *Popiſh Communion* have expreſs'd *a favourable Opinion* of it. So Dr. *Heylin* tells us, "Great Care was taken for expunging all ſuch Paſſages of the Book of Common-Prayer, as might give any Scandal or Offence to the Papiſts; and that this Book was made *ſo paſſable* amongſt them, that for ten Years they repair'd to the Pariſh Churches in Queen *Elizabeth*'s Time without Doubt or Scruple: Nay, he adds, *the Form* and Faſhion of our Devotions did *ſo ſatisfy the Pope* then being, that he ſhewed himſelf willing to confirm it by his Papal Power, and *Parpalio* was inſtructed to offer in the Name of his Holineſs, that the *Engliſh* Liturgy ſhou'd be confirm'd." *Hiſt. Reform.* p. 283. Thus *Ed. Weſton* a Popiſh Writer; "Other Proteſtants, that they might not ſeem deſperately wicked, make uſe of our Miſſal and Breviary, *&c.*" *Theatr. Vit. civ. & ſacr.* But Paſſages of this Purport in Popiſh Writers are too many to be here recited. And as for the Opinion of the *foreign Reformed Churches* about it, it is no Secret to ſuch as know any thing of the Matter, that many of them were fully of Mr. *Calvin*'s Mind, which he thus expreſſes, *Sunt in illo Libro quædam tolerabiles Ineptiæ.* And even ſome of *the Communion of the Church of England* have diſcover'd no higher Opinion of this Book, as King *James* the Firſt in a Speech at the General Aſſembly at *Edinburgh*, 1590. in which he ſpeaks thus; "As for our Neighbour Kirk of *England*, their Service is an evil ſaid Maſs in *Engliſh*; they want Nothing of the Maſs but the Liftings." And in another Speech, 1598, he declared he minded not to bring in Papiſtical or *Anglican* Biſhops. True, when the King dropp'd theſe Expreſſions, he was not a Member of *this Church* which he ſpoke ſo ſlightly of: Yet he ſeems to be very much of the ſame Mind in Reality even after he became a Member of it, and when he was ſtiled the *Solomon* of the Age by the flattering Clergy; becauſe after the reading of Mr. *Calderwood*'s *Altare Damaſcenum* or *Edvardus Didoclavius*, being ſomewhat penſive, and being ask'd the Reaſon by an *Engliſh* Prelate ſtanding by and obſerving it, he told him he had ſeen and read ſuch a Book: Whereupon the Prelate willing his Majeſty not to let that trouble him, for they would anſwer it, he replied, not

not without ſome Paſſion: *What will you anſwer, Man? There is nothing here than Reaſon and Scripture and the Fathers.* Pref. to his Hiſt. But what is more obſervable than all this ſaid either by one or other, we are told that the Compilers of this Book of Common-Prayer left in their Preface to it a Paſſage ſignifying "they had gone "*as far as they could* in reforming the Church, conſi- "dering the Times they lived in; and hoped they that "would come after them, would, as they might, do "more." *Troughton*'s Apol. *p.* 40. And when *ſome Things* injoined by the Common-Prayer-Book were *charged* upon the Biſhops, by *Bullinger* and ſome other learned Foreigners of the Reformation, they replied in their Letters, "that none of them were in the Parlia- "ment Houſe at the paſſing of the Book; and therefore "they had no Voice in making of the Law: But that "after it was paſſed, they being choſen Biſhops, they "muſt either content themſelves to take their Places as "things were, or elſe leave them to *Papiſts* and *Luthe-* "*rans:* But in the mean Space they promis'd not to urge "their Brethren in theſe Things, and when Opportu- "nity ſhould ſerve, *to ſeek a Reformation* of them." *Life of Parker*, p. 154. As to the Ceremonies of the Church; the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer owns they are indifferent Things, for thus it ſpeaks of them: "The particular Forms of divine Worſhip, and "the Rites and Ceremonies appointed to be uſed therein, "being things in their own Nature indifferent." Again, "*The Keeping* or *Omitting* of a Ceremony in itſelf con- "ſidered *is but a ſmall Thing.*" But I ſhall not enlarge this Detail of the Opinions of others, becauſe we muſt underſtand with our own Underſtanding, as we muſt ſee with our own Eyes, and not with thoſe of another.

It is the common Opinion therefore of the Diſſenters, that *ſome publick Liturgies* are made up of *too many ſhort Collects*, that thoſe Collects have *more of Preface and Concluſion* in them by far than *Petition*, and that they are not placed in the beſt Order and Method: And of this Opinion I muſt own myſelf to be. I am apt to think, a publick Liturgy would be better in itſelf, and fitter for its great End, were it made up of two or three large Prayers. Bowing towards the Eaſt at the Mention of the Name of *Jeſus only*, I cannot approve, ſince whatever Honour it does to the Son of God, it ſeems to

reflect Diſhonour upon *the Father*, as if *He* were not *as worthy as his Son* of this external Reverence. Sitting while the Epiſtles are read, and ſtanding at the Goſpels, is a Practice without any manner of Foundation, ſince the Epiſtles are *equally inſpired* Writings as the Goſpels. And *perhaps* there may in ſeveral Parts of the Liturgy be *Plenty of Tautology*, a Thing our Saviour condemns in Heathens, and unacceptable to a Mind full of a deep Senſe of its manifold Wants. At many Burials ſeveral there are who cannot join in giving God Thanks for taking to himſelf the Soul of the Deceaſed, and in declaring they hope the Soul of the Deceaſed reſts in God. But eſpecially it is againſt their Conſciences, to declare in the Words of the *Athanaſian Creed*, that whoever does not believe that Creed, cannot be ſaved; a Creed not made, however not ſeen, till about the Year 800, near 400 Years after the Death of *Athanaſius*, nor received in the Church before the Year 1000; a Creed which has been a great Stumbling-Block to the greateſt Men that ever were Members of the eſtabliſhed Church, as Mr. *Chillingworth*, Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*, who wiſhed the Church *well rid of it*; to Biſhop *Taylor*, who ſpeaking of it ſays, "It ſeems hard to me to put *Uncharitableneſs* into the Creed, and ſo make it become *an Article* of Faith;" a Creed which many wiſe and conſcientious People cannot declare their Belief of; and a Creed in itſelf-----It is not for the Prieſt's wearing a Surplice, and ſigning a Child when baptized with the Sign of the Croſs, nor for his praying only by a Form, and preaching with Notes, nor for kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and many other ſuch Matters as theſe, that I have left the Church and gone over to the Diſſenters: But this I have done for the Reaſons abovemention'd, eſpecially for this in particular, becauſe the Worſhip which I have now embraced is the moſt agreeable to my own Judgment and Conſcience, and it is according to this I muſt act in the Buſineſs of Religion, whatever Acts of Uniformity come out; and becauſe I think it my Duty to ſtand by and encourage thoſe who appear againſt Church-Authority and a Spirit of Impoſition and Perſecution, and plead only for a further Reformation of Religion. I cannot but think that theſe Men, ſeveral of whom want neither Learning nor Virtue, meet not with the Uſage they deſerve, in being kept

out

out of the eſtabliſhed Church only for not receiving for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. For if once we begin to comply and yield to a Spirit of Impoſition, none can tell whither it will lead us; for the ſame Authority which at preſent commands me to believe 39 *Articles only*, may as reaſonably command me to believe *an even Number*, 40 or 50, or 500, *&c.* and they who to-day command me to uſe ſuch and ſuch Ceremonies as very decent and ſignificant in the Worſhip of God, may to-morrow with as much Reaſon multiply the Number, as they would make me uſe ſuch as are already appointed and are come into Faſhion. That Paſſage of the Apoſtle *Paul* I know is often cited as a Foundation for this Practice of theirs, that *all Things muſt be done decently and in Order*; which is as much to the Purpoſe as that other of the ſame Apoſtle, *The Cloak I left at* Troas, *and the Books, eſpecially the Parchment*, was for the good Archdeacon, who ſome time ago went up and down proving every Thing by it, the Canons, the Liturgy, the Canonical Veſtments, and what not. For, to uſe the Words of *an ingenious Author*, "This Plea of "Significancy will juſtify endleſs Phrenzy and Fooleries, and every Madneſs might be made a Myſtery. "For Inſtance, we might be made to *walk bare-footed* "into the Church, *to ſignify the Sanctity* of the Place, "and *to crawl upon all four* out of it, *to ſignify the* "*Humiliation* of our Hearts. A Match of *Cudgel-*"*Playing* every *Sunday* might be inſtituted *to ſignify* "*our ſpiritual Warfare*, and a *Game at Blind-Man's* "*Buff, to ſignify the Darkneſs* of our Underſtandings. "In ſhort, any Thing might be made to ſignify every "Thing."

Upon the whole, it is a great Miſtake in many to think that the Diſſenters keep away from the Eſtabliſh'd Worſhip of theſe Kingdoms only for a few indifferent Rites and Ceremonies of human Inſtitution and Appointment; and therefore they do not deſerve to be ridiculed as they have been, as Perſons of too ſqueamiſh and ſcrupulous Conſciences, and a factious and obſtinate Temper towards their Eccleſiaſtical Superiors. It is not becauſe they are *too ſtiff* and *proud* to *bow* at the Name of Jeſus *or kneel* at the Sacrament, nor becauſe they have a great Averſion *to Gowns and Surplices* and other Canonical Robes, but none *to black Coats and Cloaks*; it is not

becauſe Organ-Muſick is not agreeable to their Ears, and the Sign of the Croſs in Baptiſm is a ſymbolical Sign, that they ſtatedly abſent from the Eſtabliſh'd Church. The Reaſons of their Nonconformity, as appears from what has been ſaid, are far more ſubſtantial and important; they cannot eaſily and uncharitably condemn their Fellow Chriſtians for not believing *human* and *uncharitable Schemes* concerning *the Trinity*, which they apprehend have little or no Foundation in divine Revelation; and they cannot encourage a Spirit of Impoſition and Tyranny over the Conſcience, and deſert thoſe who ſtood faſt for the Liberty wherewith Jeſus has made them free: In a Word, it is their unalienable Right to judge for themſelves what Creed is the moſt agreeable to Chriſtian and divine Truth, and they are indiſpenſably obliged, as they value their own Perfection and Happineſs, to act in the Affair of Religion according to their own Conſciences, however they may be reviled by others for the Sincerity and Conſcientiouſneſs of their Conduct. They deſire to think no worſe of others for differing from them in religious Sentiments and external Modes of Worſhip; and are ſatisfied others ſhould think no worſe of them upon theſe Accounts, becauſe it is not in any Man's Power to believe as he pleaſes, or as others command him; and becauſe involuntary Errors, eſpecially in a Mind ſincere and honeſt, are as acceptable to God as Orthodoxy which is owing merely to Chance, or to a Neglect of impartial Enquiry after Truth.

F. This Argument of yours in Defence of moderate and conſcientious Nonconformity, I muſt own, is not a trifling and inconſiderable one, but has more in it than at firſt I apprehended, and than many believe. Conſcience in the Affairs of Religion is not ſo much a Jeſt as *ſome* have been ready to repreſent it, nor does it deſerve to be treated with that Contempt that I have ſeen *ſome* caſt upon it. "I ſhall therefore, to make Uſe of the "Words of our excellent Mr. *Chillingworth*, think "no Man the worſe nor the worſe Chriſtian; I will "love no Man the leſs for differing in Opinion from "me. And what Meaſure I mete to others, I expect "from them again. I am fully aſſured that God does "not, and therefore that Man ought not to require any "more than this, to believe the Scriptures to be the

"Word

" Word of God, to endeavour to find out the true Senſe " of it, and to live according to it."

S. If Men were left to their full Liberty in Religion, free from the Reſtraints of human Creeds and Canons, of Confeſſions and Catechiſms, and were in Danger of meeting with no Degree or Kind of Perſecution upon a merely religious Account; would Men require no more than what you have mention'd, they would certainly find it to be the only Means of ſuppreſſing Hereſy and reſtoring Unity amongſt Chriſtians. Were but the Chriſtian Church every where *ſtripped of worldly Conſiderations* and Arguments, and every Chriſtian Congregation allowed to chooſe their own Miniſters and to encourage them as they thought good, and to worſhip God in their own Way, true Virtue as well as Unity would revive; Spiritual Paſtors would endeavour to merit Eſteem and all proper Encouragements from their People, by being and doing Good; and Chriſtian People could not fail to value and ſufficiently to encourage ſuch deſerving Paſtors. The Chriſtian Church would appear with another Face, more pleaſing than we have long ſeen; the Clergy would do their Duty, and People theirs: Sects and Parties would not mutually vex and envy, anathematize and damn each other; becauſe Church Power and Grandeur, the great Cauſe of ſpiritual Tyranny and Oppreſſion, would be removed: In a Word, in this State of the Church Charity would reign inſtead of Uncharitableneſs, Liberty inſtead of Slavery, Freedom of Thought inſtead of Bigotry, and Uniformity itſelf inſtead of Confuſion, Peace and Harmony amongſt Neighbours inſtead of Religious Animoſities, and Sincerity in the Room of Hypocriſy. And *well* would it be, if the Civil Magiſtrates would every where take this into their Conſideration, and *diſtribute their Bounties* according to *the real Uſefulneſs* and *Importance* of their Subjects in their reſpective Commonwealths. Were this State of Things introduced, Perſecution would ceaſe, the Drones and Loiterers in the Prieſthood would meet with their due Deſert, and Men of real Worth ſtand fair for being encouraged according to their Merit; Learning, good Senſe, and a generous Way of thinking in religious Matters, and every thing truly Valuable and Praiſe-worthy would flouriſh; particularly Religion, and not the Form

of

of it only, pure Religion and undefiled, and not a ceremonious and ritual Religion would grow upon the Ruins of Superſtition and Bigotry, Hypocriſy and Uncharitableneſs. Our Reformation at firſt was a glorious Advance towards this happy State, and who knows but Proteſtant Powers may not only ſee the Reaſonableneſs of advancing ſtill nearer towards it, but reſolve upon it, in Contempt of all Eccleſiaſtical Oppoſition.

FINIS.

W. O

BOOKS Printed for JOHN NOON, *at the* White-Hart *near* Mercers-Chapel *in* Cheapſide.

I. THE Argument *à priori* concerning the Exiſtence and Perfections of God, and its Importance to Virtue and True Religion, ſtated and conſider'd. Together with the Difficulties and Objections which have any where occurred; particularly in a Diſſertation, by a Learned Hand, at the End of Mr. *Law*'s Treatiſe of Space, *&c.*

II. Remarks upon Dr. *Butler*'s Sixth Chapter of *The Analogy of Religion*, &c. *Concerning Neceſſity*; and alſo upon *The Diſſertation of the Nature of Virtue*. By *Philanthropus*.

In the Preſs, and ſpeedily will be publiſhed,

I. An Enquiry into the Law of Nature and Revelation. To which is annexed, A Diſcourſe concerning the Mediator between God and Man.

II. The Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper vindicated: From the Miſrepreſentations and Falſe Reaſonings of *Richard Warren*, D. D. and particularly from his abuſive Charge of Socinianiſm. In Remarks on the three Parts of his Anſwer to that Book, and alſo on his Appendix.

III. *Analepſis:* or, An Eſſay to prove the Aſcenſion or Tranſlation of the Bleſſed Virgin into Heaven, Soul and Body.

IV. The Anatomy of the Human Body epitomiz'd and illuſtrated. Containing, firſt, A Short and General Deſcription of the ſeveral Parts of the Body, under the three Heads of OSTEOLOGY, or the Doctrine of the Bones; SARCOLOGY, of the Fleſhy Parts; HYGROLOGY, of the Fluids: With the Uſes of every Part in the whole Structure and Oeconomy. Secondly, A Set of Copper-Plates, exhibiting a clear, juſt, and lively Idea of the Figure, Size, Situation, Texture, and Connexion of the Whole and every Part of the Body, in Sculptures exact to the Life.